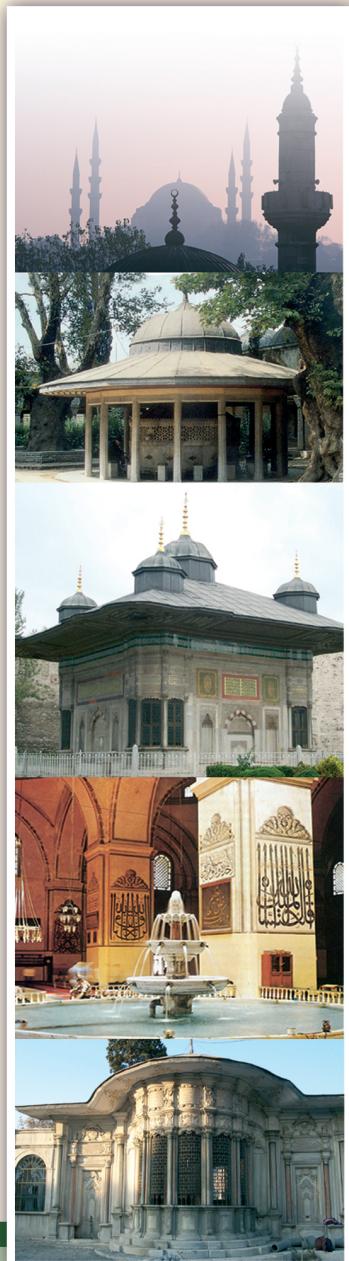


FROM THE APEX OF ISLAMIC CIVILIZATION

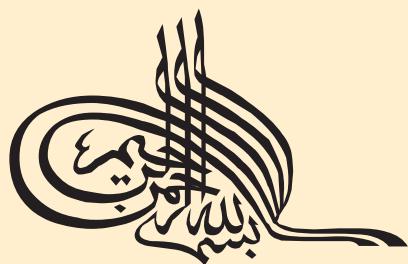


ENDOWMENT, CHARITY, AND SERVICE IN ISLAM

Osman Nuri Topbaş



ERKAM PUBLICATIONS



Istanbul: 2016 / 1437 H

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Osman Nuri Topbaş

Original Title: Vakif İnfak Hizmet

Author: Osman Nûri Topbaş

Translators: İsmail Eriş

Copy Editor: Heather Martin

Graphics: Zakir Shadmanov

ISBN: 978-9944-83-178-9

Address: İkitelli Organize Sanayi Bölgesi Mah.
Atatürk Bulvarı, Haseyad

1. Kısım No: 60/3-C
Başakşehir, İstanbul, Turkey

Tel: (+90-212) 671-0700 pbx

Fax: (+90-212) 671-0748

E-mail: info@islamicpublishing.org

Web site: www.islamicpublishing.org

Printed by: Erkam Printhouse

Language: English

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Foreword

All Praises are due to Allah, Most Beneficent, Most Merciful, who bestowed upon us the blessing of faith.

Peace and blessings be upon the Everlasting Pride of the universe, who was sent as Mercy to the worlds.

As a creed, the spiritual essence of Islam is *tawhid* or believing in the oneness of Allah, and, in practice, good manners, uprightness, and compassion. Compassion is the first fruit of faith. A soul without compassion cannot be considered alive. *Basmalah*, which is the beginning of all good deeds, and *Fatihah*, the opening chapter of the Qur'an, start with the names of Allah, "Most Beneficent" and "Most Merciful", which are statements of His Benevolence and Mercy. The lives of the prophets and Muslim saints are also filled with anecdotes of compassion. One of the most distinguished manifestations of compassion in this world is "*infāq*" or giving in charity for the sake of Allah.

Creating a tranquil society, by raising gracious, kind and thoughtful individuals, is one of the main goals of the religion. This process depends on both nurturing the soul with feelings of clemency and sympathy and reflecting those same qualities through *zakāt*, *infāq*, and service to the community. After all, these are opportunities for the servant to repay his overwhelming debt of gratitude to his Lord.

Altruism is the greatest sign of real love. Depending on the level of his love, the lover regards the sacrifice for the sake of his beloved as pleasure and inevitable duty. This is why, it is required for a

believing heart to encompass and mercifully embrace all of creation out of respect for the Creator.

A serious campaign for *infāq* and service is needed in the contemporary world, where brotherhoodly sentiments have weakened, peace and tranquility in the society have been lost, and hate and enmity have intensified. In addition to these ills of contemporary society, the ever present social and economic crises and the submission of individuals to the material world hinder financial sacrifices, one of the most neglected aspects of our faith. In this regard, the first subjects to address are our duties through *zakāt*, *infāq*, and social institutions of mercy such as *waqfs* or endowments.

Islamic guidelines, which regulate all aspects of life from the cradle to the grave, should be rewritten based on the requirements and needs of the time. If this is not done thoughtfully, we will neither realize our divergence from Islam's behavioral beauties, nor how much these sublime feelings have weakened in our souls as time passes by. For instance, one of these prescriptions we will address in this book is *ushr* or tithe.

We felt the need to write this book in order to remind ourselves of the financial responsibilities of our religion, such as *waqf* and *zakāt*, and in order to revisit the realities of present-day society in light of these principles. Due in part to our society's absorption into the material world, which has resulted in a spiritual crisis, our objective is to establish campaigns for *waqf*, *zakat* and *infāq* that will create eagerness, enthusiasm and awareness in our society, and eventually cure our current social maladies.

We have used several historical accounts related to our topic as a measure for controlling our conscience. The longevity of the Ottoman State, extending six and a half centuries and its diversity, including numerous religious and ethnic communities depended upon its commitment to support and defend a notion of life based on peace and tranquility, different from the rest of the world; behind the success of

the Ottomans was certainly the philanthropic institutions and the significance given to *waqfs* among them.

It needs to be stated that history, which is the collection of the national experiences, defines the memory of nations. Therefore no nation can be imagined which does not need the guidance of history's boundless contents in order to pursue the right course into the future. This is especially true for a history teeming with unparalleled examples of material and spiritual achievements, which confidently provide a well-trodden path for future generations.

Examined from this perspective, the manner in which our history holds military, civilization, science, and morality, among others, peaks incomparable to any other civilization. However, in the current period, there are still some ignorant people who submit themselves to the material world, and attack the historical and spiritual values of our people. The defamatory efforts of those who reside in this beautiful land but lack any historical connection with the Muslim nation actually reflect their inner world. In fact, history of the efforts of those who have attempted to leave us destitute of properly benefitting from the fountain that is molded with religious and spiritual values is very old. The most insidious methods have been tried to weaken our religious and spiritual values, which are the real influential reasons for almost one thousand years of our world sovereignty. As a result of enemies' combined efforts, in the course of time, some of them unaware, some of them treacherous, several extensions of them came into being inside the Muslim nation.

As a result of their mutual endeavors, new generations have been created, whose historical conscience is crippled and who refuse all their connection with their past. Today we are at a very terrifying stage of this tragedy. In order to regain a status worthy of our ancestors, we have to turn our face to that blessed source again. Only in this way, can we free ourselves from the feeling of inferiority caused by the technological achievement of the West, and we may attain again the zeal of rising up.

This is the only source, which will grant our nation the power to be shaken and elevated materially and spiritually. Deprivation of it, on the other hand, can present as horrible an ending as the deprivation of life itself and beyond.

We believe that the suffering caused by the forgetfulness or lack of awareness of the events that have taken place in the course of history will create a spark of curiosity in our Muslim nation, which will in turn draw them to reflect on the factors that helped transform our ancestors into a great global power. One of the main goals of this book, published in such a blessed season, is to open the gate to this sacred source.

On a humanistic and civilizational level, one of the most luminous pages of our historical inheritance are the endeavors to promote charity, endowment and beneficence, which had been the means to revive and equip our people with spiritual attributes, which are the most perfect way to realize our object for creation. We especially would like to shed light on this aspect of our history.

Indeed, as we will see later in this book, our Muslim predecessors, after taking care of the needs of the destitute, would even extend their hands of mercy, compassion and care to helpless animals – a level of mercy that has yet to be reached in any part of the world today, and a prime example of a lesson to be learned in our magnificent history.

The Ottoman civilization treated the insane with great respect and esteem, hence they nicknamed them as “respected needy ones.” They made efforts to cure them with music therapy and nourishing them with game.

In the Ottoman endowment civilization, hands of mercy were also extended to the lepers, who were secluded from the society due to their contagious illness. Institutions called “*Miskinler Tekkesi*” were established to offer them treatment.

Elegant bird houses were built under the eaves of buildings to protect and feed injured storks who were not able to migrate.

Further, a point of true mercy and love that should be addressed is how the Ottomans strove with the utmost care, effort, and politeness to avoid hurting the dignity and honor of the helpless, the poor, the widow, and the orphan, by devising “charity rocks” in the mosques in order to prevent a face-to-face interaction between the donor and recipient. Even food items and home cooked meals that were distributed to homes were delivered to at night so not to offend the self-respect of the poor. Foundations were established that compensated for accidental damage done by servants, in order to protect their dignity. The above mentioned are among the vital principles to be reflected on, which were originally established to appreciate the dignity and honor of humanity.

Through these examples, we will realize the beauty and significance of giving as much as we reflect the mercy and politeness of their contents in our lives – a sure means of advice and mission of awakening, which we are severely in need of today.

The reason for presenting so many examples in this book is not only to show our respect and appreciation to our predecessors, but also to learn from their examples and to lead ourselves by applying them to our lives.

The tradition of endowments in Ottoman practice is an exceptional case-study for modern society as it exhibits ways that spread mercy, love and compassion in a society. In this book, we, together with our readers, witness the legacy brought about by charity and caring for others. May our Lord bestow upon us many blessings so that readers may benefit from this exposition.

Of course, the aforementioned enlightening, sublime and beautiful examples of serving others could only be achieved by altruistic and exemplary men of service. In other words, all of these charitable activities and services bear results only to the extent of their spiritual perfection. Responsibilities tasked to the hands of competent, well-trained people generate the perfect results, whereas works left in the

hands of naive and unskilled people produce pitiful results, which is why we have added a chapter about service and its manners. Therein we have addressed the rules and standards of service and the guiding personalities necessary to achieve the optimal etiquette and state.

These rules and measures classified under twelve entries deal with both spiritual and physical domains such as outward appearance and inward essence, knowledge and insight, reason and heart, this world and the hereafter, which are prerequisites for a man of service. Our aim is to train candidates as distinguished, qualified, and capable individuals to be servants of Allah, which will lead them to eternal goodness.

O Lord! Please bestow upon us this station.

I would like to thank all the academics who have helped me in the process of producing this book. May Allah accept their services and transform their efforts into *sadaqa al-jariyah* (or continuous charity).

O Allah the real owner of sovereignty! Let all the manifestations of charity, service, mercy and compassion on Your path be the endless treasures of our spiritual lives.

Amin!

Osman Nûri TOPBAŞ
ÜSKÜDAR/2002

*From The Apex
Of Islamic Civilization*



Civilization of Endowments

Chapter One

OUR CIVILIZATION OF ENDOWMENTS

Endowments are institutionalized forms of continuous charity as well as an expression of mercy, brotherly love and affection for creation for the sake of their Creator. This entails the dedication of specified property for the sake of Allah; in other words, it means to prevent *tamlīk* and *tamalluk*¹ of its possession forever and to preserve it for the confined benefit of specified philanthropy. Its goal is to gain Allah's contentment by giving generously to the needy, and approaching them with sympathy and compassion. In fact, giving wealth – even one's life when needed – for the sake of Allah is a Divine command that must be obeyed by all Muslims since it is a precondition toward the fulfillment of faith. It is ordered in the Qur'an:

“Only those are Believers who have believed in Allah and His Messenger, and have never since doubted, but have

1. **Tamlīk** means to give the possession of an asset to another person; and **tamalluk** conveys the meaning of ownership of an asset.



*“Souls drown in poverty
and need look like a house
filled with smoke. Open
a window to that smoke
filled house by hearing
their needs and finding a
remedy for them, so its
smoke clears away, and
your heart and soul get
soften...”*

Jalal al-Din Rumi



“When the son of Adam dies, all his acts come to an end but in three respects: sadaqah al-jariyah, or recurring charity, or a knowledge (by which people) benefit, or a pious son (and/or daughter), who prays for him (for the deceased).”

(Muslim, The Book of Bequests (Kitab Al-Wasiyya), 14)

striven with their belongings and their persons in the Cause of Allah: such are the sincere ones.” (Qur'an 49; 15)

“Who believe in the Unseen, are steadfast in prayer, and spend out of what We have provided for them.” (Qur'an 2; 3)

“Allah has purchased of the Believers their persons and their goods; for their (in return) is the Garden (of Paradise)...” (Qur'an 9; 111)

“And there is the type of man who gives his life to earn the pleasure of Allah; and Allah is full of kindness to (his) devotees.” (Qur'an 2; 207)

Islam, seeing this world as preparation for the hereafter and the hereafter as the continuation of this world, sets up the perfect balance between body & spirit, matter & essence. This balance establishes the strongest foundation of a peaceful and prosperous society.

Waqfs, which serve in many diverse areas, are the most suitable institutions of infāq. Waqfs truly embody the Islamic ideals of mercy and compassion. It is commanded to us in the Qur'an to give from our most beloved belongings in order to earn the pleasure of Allah.

For a human being, the most valuable assets in this world are their lives and their wealth. Entering Paradise and gaining the pleasure of Allah the Almighty is only achievable by fully submitting one's self and wealth for the sake of Allah. That is why those who live their lives and are generous with their wealth for the sake of Allah are called

“endowed people.” This expression is fitting since they endow themselves and all their belongings in the way of beneficence.

Those people play an extremely significant role in ensuring peaceful and tranquil society. Their services and activities are generally not restricted to the limits of their mortality; in fact, they extend into the future by means of the establishments founded by them. At the forefront of “endowed people” stand the prophets, the friends of Allah, and those who reach perfection through their training. They have spread their faith all over the world and filled the golden pages of history.

One of the reasons why the contemporary world has been witnessing the range of social and economic problems is due to the destruction of the old and rich endowments and the insufficiency of the newly established ones. Now it is the responsibility of the rich Muslims of our time to strive to re-establish endowments.

It is stated in a tradition of the Prophet (pbuh):

“When the son of Adam dies, all his acts come to an end but in three respects: *sadaqah al-jariyah*, or recurring charity, or a knowledge (by which people) benefit, or a pious son (and/or daughter), who prays for him (for the deceased).” (Muslim, *The Book of Bequests (Kitab Al-Wasiyya)*, 14)

Muslim scholars have interpreted recurring charity as “endowments.” Recurring charity means to leave behind products which constantly serve humanity for the sake of Allah.



*Owner of
property,
owner of
goods*

*Who is the
first owner
of them?*

*Property is
a lie, goods
are a lie,
Here, dally
yourself
with them
for a while*

Yunus EMRE



“The parable of those who spend their property in the way of Allah is as the parable of a grain growing seven ears (with) a hundred grains in every ear; and Allah multiplies for whom He pleases; and Allah is Ample-giving, Knowing.”

(Qur'an 2; 261)

There are some streams and fountains, which have flowed limpidly since the creation of the world. And they will continue to flow until the last days, quenching the thirsty, bestowing hope and joy to the sorrowful, and inspiring souls. The Messenger of Allah (pbuh) likened some kinds of charitable activities to those fountains. However, they are somewhat different than regular fountains, because their benefits will flow through eternity, not just until the end of this world, but eternally, and will keep adding rewards to the records of the servant. In other words, it becomes *sadaqah jariyah*.

Allah the Almighty has given everything in the universe for the service of human beings and endowed them with its responsibility. All assets including children, property, and health are entrusted to human beings, who are required to protect them fastidiously. Safeguarding them as needed is the only way to summon Divine blessings and mercy.

As Yunus Emre delicately states:

*Owner of property, owner of goods
Who is the first owner of them?
Property is a lie, goods are a lie,
Here, dally yourself with them for a while*

In reality, everything belongs to Allah the Almighty. Only the temporal right of disposition is given to servants. That is why one of the requirements for becoming a true believer is to live our lives knowing that all our possessions are entrusted to us. In this respect, disposing of our possessions beyond the limits of *infāq* indicates a breach of trust. Not only will the reckoning for this breach be difficult in

the Hereafter, but it obviously will also cause serious crises on both individual and social levels. Spending for the sake of Allah protects society against the dangers of capitalism and prevents envious and hostile feelings of the members of the society toward each other.

Affluent members of the society should never forget that one day they might lose everything and become tomorrow's poor and needy. That is why they should do their best in joining the campaigns of *infāq*. This type of action represents a practical measure of their gratitude for the blessings of Allah the Almighty.

The real blessing of charity in the way of Allah depends on intention and sincerity. The important thing is to perform our actions with sincerity and piety. Allah the Almighty bestows tremendous blessings for benefaction performed for His sake even if the amount is really small. It is mentioned in the verse:

“The parable of those who spend their property in the way of Allah is as the parable of a grain growing seven ears (with) a hundred grains in every ear; and Allah multiplies for whom He pleases; and Allah is Ample-giving, Knowing.” (2; 261)²

The Messenger of Allah (pbuh) says:

2. For English translation of the verses, I have benefited from Sh - kir, M.H. (trans.), *The Qur'an = [al-Qur'an al-hakīm]*, Elmhurst, N.Y.: Tahrike Tarsile Qur'an, 1997, and Pickthall, Marmaduke William, *The meaning of the glorious Koran; an explanatory translation*, New York: Dorset Press, [1988?] (translator)



Endowments are institutionalized forms of continuous charity as well as an expression of mercy, brotherly love and affection for creation for the sake of their Creator.



“Whoever builds a mosque for the love of Allah, Allah will build for him a mansion in paradise.” (Muslim, *The Book of Masajid*, 24)

Another significant benefit of endowments is that it keeps the wealthy from spending extravagantly and ostentatiously squandering their riches.

The main goal for establishing a *waqf* is to gain Allah’s contentment and achieve happiness in the Hereafter. Since the earliest days, endowments have been established to achieve this goal. That is why this goal has been incorporated into the term “*al-taqarrub ilallah*” (a means of getting closer to Allah), and it has been accepted as one of the conditions of an endowment’s validity.

Therefore, we are required to be much more sensitive with respect to endowments and righteously maintain these Divine trusts. Throughout Islamic history, this matter has been intently observed, and when it was violated, Muslims faced tragic consequences. In fact, the camel given to the Prophet Saleh (pbuh) as a miracle did not belong to anybody, but it was entrusted to the benefit of human beings by Allah. In this way, it was similar to an endowment. The milk it produced can be likened to a public fountain and its owner was Allah the Almighty; however, the people of Saleh killed the camel and violated the trust. Consequently, they were destroyed.

The parable about Solomon (pbuh) and the two sparrows is an exemplary one.

On one occasion, Solomon (pbuh) rebuked a sparrow. It replied threateningly:

“Whoever builds a mosque for the love of Allah, Allah will build for him a mansion in paradise.”

(Muslim, *The Book of Masajid*, 24)

“I could devastate your reign.”

Solomon (pbuh) said:

“You are such a tiny bird and you say that you could destroy my kingdom.”

To this, the little bird responded:

“I can wet my wings and rub them on endowed soil. Then I can take the soil and throw it onto your palace’s roof. That would be enough to destroy your palace!...”

This parable reveals how much attention we should pay and how sensitive we should be regarding endowed property.

In fact, our ancestors advised us to be careful of a number of Ws (i.e. unnecessarily uttering the word *wallahi* [by Allah], to become an undutiful and irresponsible *wali* [governor], and to become a *wasi* [guardian]) that we cannot fully execute its requirements, and to realize the weight of responsibility in dealing with the property of waqfs in cases of improper usage. However, we should not misread the meaning of this advice. When someone has the right qualifications and is able to properly take care of property belonging to a waqf, he/she will be responsible for not serving endowments. The real meaning of the aforementioned warning is to emphasize the necessary caution taken in protection and distribution of waqf property.

Waqf is a moveable or immovable property whose ownership belongs to Allah the Almighty, while its yield (i.e. usufruct, benefit and produce) is devoted to the benefit of human beings. In other



*“Whoever
annuls or
changes the
conditions
of this
endowment,
may the
curse of
Allah, of
angels,
of human
beings and
of all other
creatures be
upon him!...”*

*From the
endowment
deed of the
Mehmet the
Conqueror*



“Show mercy to those on earth, so that those above the heaven will show mercy to you”

(Tirmidhi, Birr, 16; Abu Dawud, Adab, 66).

words, when a property is donated, its title no longer belongs to the donor. It cannot be sold, donated or inherited. In order to underscore the seriousness of the waqf property's administration, a prayer and a curse are included at the beginning and end of an endowment deed. The prayer is for people who take proper care of the waqf's property, while the curse is for those who do not perform their service diligently, and cause harm to the property. The following example is an endowment deed's curse that came from the Hagia Sophia Endowment deed written by Mehmed II the Conqueror.

“Whoever annuls or changes the conditions of this endowment, may the curse of Allah, of angels, of human beings, and of all other creatures be upon him!...”

These types of curses in endowment deeds are spiritual threats. Faithful Muslims who worry about their eternal salvation would not want to be subjects of such a curse and therefore always act carefully.

Being careful in the administration and protection of endowments has gained such an important place in Islam that the statement “شرط الْوَاقِفِ كَنْصُ الشَّارِعِ” or “شَرْطُ الْوَاقِفِ كَنْصُ الشَّارِعِ” or Conditions laid down by the *waqif* [the person who establishes a waqf] are just like rules laid down by Allah the Almighty” has become a legal principle. In other words, just as the thought of changing Allah's rules is prohibited, Allah the Almighty making changes to the conditions of a *waqif* is considered impermissible. Because of this principle, endowments established centuries ago continue to function to the present day.

Endowments first started in places of worship, and then spread to other social fields. According to a narration, Abraham (pbuh) was so enraptured by Archangel Gabriel's praising Allah that he (pbuh) gave his entire herd to the Archangel. But, the Archangel didn't accept Abraham's donation because he was an angel. Thereupon, Abraham sold his herd, bought a plot of land and offered it to the benefit of the people. In this way, the first endowment began with Abraham (pbuh).³

Our beloved Prophet, who was sent as a mercy and an excellent example for all the world stated:

“Show mercy to those on earth, so that those above the heaven will show mercy to you” (Tirmidhi, *Birr*, 16; Abu Dawud, *Adab*, 66). Just as he was the most excellent example for his people in all aspects of life, he actualized endowments during his lifetime, by donating seven of his date groves in Medina and his share from the date groves in Khandaq and Khaybar for the sake of Allah the Almighty. His Companions (may Allah be pleased with them) followed his footsteps and also donated their most valuable properties. Jabir (may Allah be pleased with him) says:

“I do not know any Muhajir or Ansar wealthy enough who does not have an endowment” (Ibn Qudamah, *Al-Mughni*, vol. V, 598)

Umar (may Allah be pleased with him) gained the possession of a date garden from the booty of Khaybar. For three consecutive nights, he dreamt

3. See Bursawi, Ismail Haqqi, *Ruh al-Bayan*, vol. 2, 293.



Jabir (may Allah be pleased with him) says:

“I do not know any Muhajir or Ansar wealthy enough who does not have an endowment”

(Ibn Qudamah, *Al-Mughni*, vol. V, 598)



“By no means shall you attain to righteousness until you spend (benevolently) out of what you love; and whatever thing you spend, Allah surely knows it”

(3: 92)

that he had donated the garden. He came to the Prophet (pbuh) and said:

“O Messenger of Allah! I have never had such a valuable garden in my life. I will do whatever you order.”

The Prophet (pbuh) replied:

“If you want, you can donate it for the sake of Allah. After that, it cannot be sold, donated or inherited. Only its harvest can be given as charity.”

Immediately, Umar (r.a.) donated his garden, which benefited the needy who strove for Islam, slaves who wished to be emancipated, and wayfarers.⁴

Giving sincerely from the most beloved of possessions is a central principle in charity. On one occasion, the Companions of the Prophet were gathered in the Medina mosque, listening to the sermon of the Prophet. The Prophet (pbuh) recited the following verse:

“By no means shall you attain to righteousness until you spend (benevolently) out of what you love; and whatever thing you spend, Allah surely knows it” (3: 92)

Upon hearing this verse, the Companions began to think about how they might apply this principle to their lives. Among them was Abu Talha (r.a.). He had the greatest wealth of date-palms among the Ansar of Medina, and he prized his garden, above all, which was situated opposite the Mosque of the

4. See Bukhari, *Kitab al-Wasaya*, 22, 28.

Prophet. In fact, he used to invite the Prophet (pbuh) to his garden and offer him food and water.

Abu Talha (r.a.) was influenced by this verse so much that he came to the Prophet (pbuh) and said:

“O Allah’s Apostle! Allah says, ‘By no means shall you attain to righteousness until you spend (benevolently) out of what you love’ I prize above all my wealth this garden called Bairuha’. I want to give it in charity for Allah’s Sake, hoping for its reward from Allah. So, you can use it as Allah directs you.”⁵

According to the narrations, after this conversation, Abu Talha (r.a.) went to his garden to fulfill his commitment. He found his wife sitting under a tree therein and did not enter the garden. His wife asked:

“O Abu Talha! why are you waiting outside, why don’t you come in?”

Abu Talha replied:

“I will not go in. You also need to pack your belongings and come out.”

“O Aba Talha! Why? Is not this our garden?” his wife asked.

“No. From now on, it belongs to the needy of Medina,” he said. He continued telling his wife about the revelation of the verse and his response to it.

5. See Bukhari, *Wasaya*, 17.



Allah the Almighty has given everything in the universe for the service of human beings and endowed them with its responsibility. All assets including children, property, and health are entrusted to human beings, who are required to protect them fastidiously. Safeguarding them as needed is the only way to summon Divine blessings and mercy.



Endowments during the Ottoman Empire emerged as a bonding institution through which wealth was circulated within the society. Instead of reserving their wealth to themselves and their families, affluent members of the society offered their wealth to the benefit of their community for the sake of Allah the Almighty.

When his wife asked whether he also donated the garden in her name, he responded affirmatively. Then he listened while his wife uttered the following words:

“May Allah be pleased with you! I was thinking about the same thing, but I never had the courage to tell you. May Allah accept our charity. I am leaving this garden right away.”

It is not too hard to imagine how incredible our world would be if the praiseworthy morals of the Companions, like Abu Talha, spread throughout the entire world.

The Ottomans, who showed great care in following the footsteps of the Messenger of Allah (pbuh) and his Companions, fervently established charitable institutions and took them as their apex. As a matter of fact, endowments flourished, both in number and size, during the Ottoman period. Endowments during the Ottoman Empire emerged as a bonding institution through which wealth was circulated within the society. Instead of reserving their wealth to themselves and their families, affluent members of the society offered their wealth to the benefit of their community for the sake of Allah the Almighty.

During the Ottoman Empire, endowments reached such a level that they not only served the needs of human beings, but also addressed the needs of animals even plants. This glorious nation, which lived according to principles of Islam and served all Muslims, displayed the boundless mercy of Islam to the entire world. They founded thousands of en-

dowments all over the Empire and left no wounds unattended.

The Ottomans adopted the saying of the Prophet (pbuh): “*The best of human beings is the one who is the most beneficial to the others*” (Suyuti, *Al-Jami' al-Saghir*, vol. II, 8) as a principle for themselves and founded numerous magnificent and enduring monuments.

Services and activities of the endowments established during the Ottoman Empire encompassed an extremely vast area. The differences displayed, based on the changing needs of time and place, underlie the dynamic nature of the waqfs.

Even though it is impossible to identify and itemize all the areas of services and activities of the endowments, we can enumerate several of the significant ones as follows:

- Building and maintaining the mosques, dervish lodges, monasteries, and shrines
- Educational institutions, such as madrasas (colleges), Qur'anic schools, and other scientific institutions
- Hospices, caravansaries, hostelries, bathhouses, and hospitals
- Small mosques, libraries, and guesthouses
- Wells, canals, aqueducts, and fountains
- Soup kitchens, daycare centers
- Emancipation of slaves
- Helping the poor to provide fuel



“The best of human beings is the one who is the most beneficial to the others”

(Suyuti, Al-Jami' al-Saghir, vol. II, 8)



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- Helping servants to buy and replace the cups and bowls that they broke
- Helping orphan girls with their preparation for marriage
- Helping debtors pay their debts
- Helping widows and the needy
- Helping school children with food and clothing
- Cheering up abandoned children during religious festivals
- Taking care of the funeral services of the poor
- Providing protection and safety to elderly and homeless women.

In addition to these, the Ottomans established endowments in every conceivable field, and transformed their civilization into an endowed one. In fact, endowments can be considered as the distinctive mark of the Ottoman Empire.

We would like to explain one aspect for its significance in exemplifying our predecessors' religious astuteness. Several endowments were established for the services of Mecca and Medina, and were generally called "Haramain (two forbidden sites) Endowments." In order to ensure peace, tranquility and welfare of those blessed lands, one could see those types of endowments everywhere from Mid-Europe to Yemen and a separate administration was founded for them. In addition to the revenues of these endowments, almost all of the Ottoman sultans

sent gifts to the *Haramain* and their neighborhoods during the annual ceremony of replacing the cover of the Ka'bah. This customary ceremony, which was called "*süurre alayı*",⁶ continued until the end of the Empire. In time, these gifts constituted a considerable amount. In fact, when Sharif Hussain and his accomplices revolted against the Ottoman Empire during World War I, Fakhreddin Pasha, who was defending Medina against the rebels, put these gifts in chests and sent them to Istanbul in order to protect them from being looted. The total number of chests, which exceeded three hundred, shows how grand Ottoman gifts were.

Services performed for those blessed lands through the endowments established by the Ottoman Sultans, statesmen, and philanthropic members of the Ottoman society won the appreciation and gratitude of the entire Muslim world.

Another remarkable kind of endowment was the one established for the protection of the elderly and dependent women. Instead of helping them directly, endowments were established providing them with free wool to spin. In exchange of this work, they received a salary to support themselves. In this manner, at the end of their lives, endowments were helping them to live a comfortable and dignified life.

6. **Süurre alayı:** it was the money, gold, and gifts which were sent along with a special entourage by the Ottoman Sultans in order to be distributed to the entire Meccan and Medinan people from the poorest to the wealthiest during the month of Rajab (See Münir Atalar, *Süurre-i Hümeyun ve Süurre Alayları*, Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı yayınları, Ankara, 1991, p. 2)



Philanthropic sensitivity in the Ottoman society reached such a height that not just human beings but also animals and even plants were taken under the protective shelter.



Everybody in Ottoman society, from Sultans to the laymen, had the philanthropic consciousness and sensitivity. Murshid kamils encouraged people to be generous.

Philanthropic sensitivity in the Ottoman society reached such a height that, as we mentioned above, not just human beings but also animals and even plants were taken under the protective shelter. In fact, during the Ottoman period, animal hospitals were established for the care of sick migratory birds, such as storks, and their expenditures were covered by endowments. Astounded by this sensitivity, French army officer Comte de Bonneval (14 July 1675 - 23 March 1747) talks about his days in the Ottoman lands:

“It is possible to see crazy enough Turks who would donate money to workers to water the trees in order to protect them from drying up.”

Because the establishment of endowments requires a certain level of spiritual maturity, the guidance of *murshid kamils* or perfect Sufi teachers presided over the endeavor. The fruits of spiritual discipline, including altruism, generosity, and sincerity, was suitable for this purpose.

Dervish lodges were the common centers of spiritual discipline in Ottoman society. They were the centers for absorbing “the oral culture” and achieving moral maturity. Spiritual maturity gained in these centers was one of the most significant stimuli in the establishment of endowments and popularization of solidarity and unity among the populace. As a matter of fact, these lodges were themselves endowments. Most of the students of these lodges achieved the attribute of *vakif insan* or devoted person, and left several pious foundations behind.

Some of the pious foundations established as a result of these philanthropic activities have survived to the present day and still tend to the needs of society today. Some of the mosques, fountains, military barracks, hospitals and other philanthropic services are the surviving memories of the Ottoman days.

Everybody in Ottoman society, from Sultans to the laymen, had the philanthropic consciousness and sensitivity. *Murshid kamils* encouraged people to be generous. Aziz Mahmud Hudayi, for instance, wrote in his letter to Murad III:

“Just as your ancestor Sultan Suleyman brought water from the Strandzha Mountains, and relieved the thirst of his people, you too should bring wood from the Bolu Mountains and distribute it to your people.”

The Ottoman Empire, which ruled over a massive expanse of the world and affected the course of history, ensured peace and tranquility in their society through pious foundations. Whether rich or poor, strong or weak, all lived in a state of spiritual brotherhood. By means of pious foundations, the Ottoman society reached the highest level of “social justice”, a standard still sought after by nations today.

The “novel” as a literary genre interestingly did not appear until the last days of the Empire. The late Turkish writer Cemil Meriç quaintly explains the reason for this as follows:

“In the Ottoman society there was no tragedy to create a novel.”



According to the sayings of the Prophet (pbuh) a sinful woman was forgiven just because she had given some water to a thirsty dog. On the other hand another woman who left a cat hungry and caused the death of the poor animal was punished in the hellfire.

(See Muslim, Kitab al-Salam, 153, 151)



“Just as your ancestor Sultan Suleyman brought water from the Strandzha Mountains, and relieved the thirst of his people, you too should bring wood from the Bolu Mountains and distribute it to your people.”

Aziz Mahmud Hudayi (q.s.)

Even though “mercy” has been accepted as one of the principles of Christianity, pious foundations in the West, which are manifestations of this quality, are not as common as in the Muslim world. We understand from the memoirs of western ambassadors and bureaucrats in the Ottoman Empire that even the currently existing foundations in the West were established as a result of their advice and suggestions. Famous French ambassador Busberg’s memoir is a typical example of these recollections, which include this type of confession.

On a more specific note, the Ottomans were especially careful to ensure that neither donors nor the recipient of the donation knew each other. Through this tradition, philanthropists protected themselves from the dangers of hypocrisy. Because donations were distributed through the mosques and dervish lodges, it also helped to strengthen the spiritual state of the society.

We can observe the best manifestation of this sensitivity in the endowment deed of Sultan Mehmed II, the conqueror:

“I, the Conqueror of Istanbul and humble slave Sultan Mehmed, have endowed my 136 pieces of shops in the Taşlik precinct of Istanbul, which I bought with my own money, with the following conditions:

With the revenues of the above mentioned real estate, I have appointed two men to each street of Istanbul. These men will walk along the street with a bucket of ashes and lime, and they will cover the spits of people with the ash and lime. They will get 20 akchas daily for their service.

In addition, I have appointed 10 surgeons, 10 doctors and 3 orderlies to take care of the people's wounds. They will go out on the specified days of the month, and will knock on every single door without exception. They will check if there is anybody sick, and if there is, they will help them. If there is no cure for their illness, they will take the sick person to Dar-al Ajaza (hospice) at no charge.

God forbid, we witness a famine. In such a case, let 100 weapons be given to the hunters. They will go and hunt the wild animals except during their season of laying eggs and when they have cubs at the Balkan Mountains, so they will keep feeding the sick.

Moreover, families of the martyrs and the poor people of Istanbul will eat from the soup kitchens of my endowment. If they cannot come to the soup kitchen by themselves, their meal should be taken to their houses in the dark without letting anybody know!..."

As seen from this deed, Sultan Mehmed set up several decent principles of manners for helping the needy. He took precautions even for the rare acts like "spitting around." While ordering the sick to be fed by game meat, he also prohibited hunting during their season of laying eggs in order to protect the "ecological balance of nature." In addition to his mercy and compassion toward his people, he also safeguarded the welfare of animals.

Five centuries ago, long before the present-day discussion over pollution and ecological imbalance, environmental stewardship institutionally took root – an exemplary scene from history for us today.



Sultan Mehmed set up several decent principles of manners for helping the needy. He took precautions even for the rare acts like "spitting around." While ordering the sick to be fed by game meat, he also prohibited hunting during their season of laying eggs in order to protect the "ecological balance of nature."



The exact number of endowments established during the Ottoman Empire is difficult to ascertain. Nevertheless, approximately 26,300 of them have been accounted for, which is already an exemplary indicator in showing how altruistic they were.

Distribution of meals to the families of martyrs in the dark is another humble example of their sincerity to protect people's dignity and honor. This also serves as an excellent lesson for future generations.

We also need to mention that reading the contents of endowment deeds is sufficient to see how people were connected to each other with the sense of mercy and solidarity in the Ottoman society, living Islam in its fullest sense.

Consider a society in which people put a red flower in front of houses where there is a sick person, so everybody passing by knows that they should keep quiet so not to disturb, and also to respect the rights of the home. Evidently, it is impossible to account for all the details of sensitivity and maturity from the history of the Ottoman Empire in such a short book; for now, we are content with the aforementioned examples.

The exact number of endowments established during the Ottoman Empire is difficult to ascertain. Nevertheless, approximately 26,300 of them have been accounted for, which is already an exemplary indicator in showing how altruistic our predecessors were.⁷

7. "In Ottoman Empire when someone established a pious foundation, he/she were to endorse the endowment deed to a judge and then register it to the office in charge of the records. Endowment deeds which were registered to the registry records are now kept in the archive of Vakiflar Genel Mudurlugu in Ankara. There are 26,300 endowment deeds in that archive. However the approximate number of pious foundations in Ottoman Empire can be known only after examination of various city registers." (See Ziya Kazıcı, *İslami ve Sosyal Açıdan Vakıflar*, pp. 43-44).

The task performed by pious foundations has had more significance historically during periods of vulnerability. After losing vast areas of land in Rumelia as a result of defeat in the Russo-Turkish War (1877–1878) and the arrival of hundreds of thousands of immigrants in Istanbul, endowments played a more active role than the Ottoman state in helping them. For an extended time, pious foundations provided both food and shelter for them. Similar services were offered during the tough years of the Balkan Wars and World War I. Millions of people were only able to survive with the help of generous Ottoman endowments. The most recent example of this is the Marmara earthquake, which happened on August 17, 1999. Memories of the social services provided by endowments are still fresh in the minds and hearts of our nation. Pious foundations are, however, not just for times of crises but for the perpetual needs of helpless individuals. This is the primary task of endowments.

Undeniably, even during prosperous times, there have been people beyond the reach of the state needing assistance. For those people, pious foundations were always in service. We can use Sokollu Mehmed Pasha's endowments as an example. Sokollu Mehmed Pasha was originally from Serbia and also was as a sincere Muslim. He was one of the most successful grand viziers of the Ottoman administration, who served during the high point of the Empire. This noble man built several mosques, fountains, madrasas and other facilities, and endowed them for the benefit of the public.⁸ It is



It is easy to reach the needy who openly tell their needs. We have to look for and find the ones who are too shy to tell their needs and secretly help them to protect their dignity.

8. In addition to his charitable establishments in Rumelia, he also



Consider a society in which people put a red flower in front of houses where there is a sick person, so everybody passing by knows that they should keep quiet so not to disturb, and also to respect the rights of the home.

very edifying to learn what Evliya Celebi says about his endowment deed:

“... If a guest comes from the suburbs in the middle of the night, let the door be opened and let he/she be taken in. Let he/she be offered from the prepared food. But under any circumstances do not let he/she stay outside. He/she should be provided shelter for the night.

In the morning, the innkeeper should call out loudly like a town crier:

“O ummah of Muhammad! Are your belongings, your lives, your rides, and your clothes intact? Do you need anything?” When the guests reply all at once: “Everything is alright. May Allah have mercy on the soul of the benefactor!” the doorman opens the doors at dawn.

Then pray for them and advise them, “Be careful! Don’t walk absent-mindedly! Don’t befriend strangers! Go and may Allah help you!...”

The following excerpt from the endowment deed of Naqib al-Ashraf⁹ Esad Efendi reveals the grace within his soul:

“... Let all the needs of the old, the poor and the sick who cannot take care of themselves be taken care of for them. Let also the marriage preparations of the poor girls, who are at the age of marriage be bought for them.”

built two great mosques in Istanbul. One of them is in Azarkapi, which has a magnificent fountain. The other is the “Shahid Mehmed Pasha” mosque, which is located on the way from Sultan Ahmed to Kumkapi.

9. **Naqib al-Ashraf:** is the title for the clerks appointed by the government for the services of the descendants of the Prophet.

For centuries, charitable establishments built by our compassionate predecessors have not only left impartial writers of the West astonished, but also those who often wrote biased articles about Turkish people. Ismail Hami Danismend gives numerous examples related to this issue in his book "*Eski Türk Seciye ve Ahlâki*". For example, the famous voyager Du Loir states in his travel book published in Paris:

"Let me summarize the Turkish customs and traditions: their benevolence covers not just human beings, but also animals. There are guesthouses called *imarets* all over the Ottoman land. As a condition of the benefactor, these *imarets* help people in need regardless of their religious affiliation. Travelers can stay in them for three days and get a plate of rice each day.

In addition to *imarets*, there are also public buildings on the roadsides called *caravanserais*, whose doors are open to everybody.

Some Turks build fountains on the sides of the roads to quench the travelers' thirst. Others build fountains inside cities for their inhabitants and hire salary-based workers to serve water from the fountains.

The rich visit the jailhouses, look for people who are in jail for their debts and set the debtors free by paying their debts. They also look for the needy who are too shy to tell their needs and secretly help them to protect their dignity."

Corneille Le Bruyn writes his observations as follows:



"Feel sorry for the three persons: for a wise person who is among the ignorant, a rich person who gets poor and a respected person who loses peoples respect."



“It is an undeniable fact that Turkish people are very fond of charitable and pious services, even more than the Christians. This is the reason why there are very few beggars in the Ottoman society.

....Turks who do not have enough money to give in charity would physically work to help others. They work on the main roads if needed; they fill the water tanks on the roadsides; when there is flood, they help people cross the flooded areas. They offer numerous other acts of community service, and would not dare expect anything in return. As a matter of fact, if ever offered payment for their services, they would refuse, and say that they did what they did solely for the sake of Allah.”

In this regard Mouradgea d’Ohsson’s observances are really striking:

“At all levels of society, parents and relatives try to be role models for their children, and accustom them to participating in charitable activities. As a result of such exalting characteristics, like generosity and compassion, one’s negative attributes, e.g. selfishness, stinginess and greed, subside, and are replaced with the desire and sense of helping others. Hence, Muslims have never encountered difficulty in being charitable, exceeding all other nations in this regard.”

The following excerpt is from a letter to a father from his young child who was hospitalized in a Muslim hospital, and exemplifies how charitable foundations succeeded in caring for the needy.

“Dear dad! You were asking me if I needed money. When I get discharged from the hospital, I

A man asked the Prophet (pbuh), “What sort of deeds are better in Islam?” The Prophet replied, ‘To feed (the poor) and greet those whom you know and those whom you do not know’
(Bukhari, Kitab al-Iman, 6)

will be given a suit and five pieces of gold, so that I won't have to work for a while. Now you won't have to sell sheep from your herd...

I don't want to be discharged. The beds are soft, the sheets are clean and white, and the blankets are like velvet. There is a fountain in every room. All the rooms are heated during the cold nights. The people who are treating us are very kind and merciful. Almost every day, patients who are healthy enough are given chicken and lamb to eat. My neighbor in the next bed pretended that he hadn't been cured just to be able to eat the delicious fried chicken for one more week. But the head physician became suspicious and sent him home after letting him eat the bread and chicken, which was proof that he was in good health. So please come and see me, before they offer me my last piece of fried chicken!"

On the other hand, it is really remarkable to note that 1400 out of the 26300 confirmed pious foundations were established by women. Amongst them, Nur Banu Valide Sultan¹⁰ had several monuments built in both the Anatolian and European sides of Istanbul. Uskudar Atik Valide Mosque with its soup kitchen,

10. The official epithet for the female members of the Ottoman dynasty was "Sultan Efendi". This meant that her father was either the sultan himself or one of the son's of the sultan. If such a lady gets married with someone outside the members of the dynasty, their daughters were named "Hanum Sultan" and their sons were called "Beyzade", or referring to their mothers "Sultanzade". If beyzades or sultanzades got married with someone outside the imperial family, their children were not considered part of the imperial family. On the other hand, if mothers of the sultans were not coming from the imperial family – they were usually not – then their official epithet was "Valide Sultan". Sultan's wives were called "Kadin Efendi". If they were more than one then ordinal numbers would be added before the epithet.



*"He Who
created
Death and
Life, that
He may try
which of
you is best
in deed: and
He is the
Exalted in
Might, Oft-
Forgiving"
(Qur'an 67; 2)*



"Never does a Muslim plant trees or cultivate land, and birds or men or beasts eat out of them, but that is a charity on his behalf."
(Muslim, Musakat, 10)

college, hospital and double bathhouse is worth mentioning. This lady was a Jew. Her father, Yasef Nassi, was one of the prominent members of the Jewish society, who were forced to emigrate from Spain to the Ottoman land in order to escape from the massacre after the Moors' defeat by Christian armies. From the historical records, it is understood that Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent employed Yasef Nassi in intelligence services. Nassi played some negative roles during the reign of Kanuni's son Sari (the blond) Selim and accumulated enormous wealth by using his privilege of being the Sultan's father-in-law. However the system had worked perfectly, and Islamic morals and sensitivity were able to penetrate deep into the souls. His daughter Nur Banu Sultan became very eminent among the philanthropic Muslim women.

Another philanthropic imperial lady is Mâhpeyker Kösem Vâlide Sultan. She laid the foundations of the New Mosque. She had Üsküdar Çinili Mosque built along with a school, a fountain, a hadith college and a double bath house next to it. She also had the mosque at the Anadolu intersection built. Her endowment for helping poor and orphan girls get married is very well known, along with many others.

Even Kösem Sultan, who is known for her temper among the valide Sultans, took her place among the eminent figures of mercy and compassion by her endowments. Even though she laid down the foundations of the New Mosque, she did not live long enough to complete it. The honor of completing the mosque belonged to Hatice Turhan Sultan. She

had other pious deeds such as building schools, colleges, soup kitchens, libraries and fountains. It is worth mentioning that she had honey sherbets flowing from the fountains during the month of Ramadan and holy nights and would offer it to the congregation after the evening prayer. Even the quality of honey was recorded into the endowment deeds. During those days, the best quality honey was from a town called Atina, whose name was later changed to Pazar. It was written in the endowment deed that this type of honey had to be bought no matter how expensive it was. This also reveals how sensitive and fine the services of endowments were. She also left very rich resources for the continuity of the services of endowments and appointed 116 salary-based workers for the endowments administration.

Pertevniyal Valide Sultan endowed the “Valide Mosque” in Aksaray and “Ya Vedud Mosque”. She also had a library, a fountain and a school built.

Mihrimah Sultan, despite her very humble disposition, had established numerous pious foundations, among them, the “Selatin mosques” or “royal mosques”, one which is in Edirnekapi and one in Uskudar. The following is the best example manifesting her modesty. Fresh water had been brought to Mecca and Arafat from by Harun Rashid’s wife Zubayda Hanim. But by the time of Sultan Suleiman’s reign, the channels became broken and rusty. When Mihrimah Sultan learned the situation, she went to her father Sultan Suleiman and asked the old water channel to be secretly fixed by the head architect Sinan. She donated all



Our children should be raised knowing that the real owner of all wealth is Allah the Almighty. Just like we have a responsibility to teach our kids the basics of our religion, we also have the responsibility to inoculate them with the excitement of infāq and to accustom them with the believer's obligation of helping the stricken.



“O you who believe! spend out of what We have given you before the day comes in which there is no bargaining, neither any friendship nor intercession, and the unbelievers-- they are the unjust.”
(Qur'an 2; 254)

her ornaments and jewelry for the expenditures. Architect Sinan disappeared for a while after he laid down the foundations of Suleymaniye Mosque and the reason for his disappearance still is not known. One speculation is that he left for the foundation of the mosque to settle. But the real reason was to fix the water channels called “Ayn-i Zubayda,” and it stayed as a secret because of the benefactor’s wish.

Another well-known Valide Sultan is Bezmialem Valide Sultan, who left several monumental charitable works behind. Among the mosques she had built, the biggest one is Valide Mosque, located next to the Dolmabahce Palace. The famous Galata Bridge is also among her many endowments.

Her endowment established in Damascus is also very important. Here are two of the conditions of her endowment:

- *To carry the fresh water of Damascus to the pilgrims*
- *To compensate the household items broken by the maids in order to protect their pride and dignity.*

Another outstanding foundation from the Bezmiâlem Vâlide Sultan is the *Ghuraba-i Muslimin Hospital* built by a significant donation from her private wealth. This monument began giving service with its mosque and fountain in 1843 and since then it has been delivering cures to the poor members of the Muslim ummah.

The sultans’ wives and daughters placed their utmost importance on water and furnished fountains all over Mecca, Arafat and Istanbul. They built

the aqueducts that still remain today, repaired the water canals and provided abundant water for the entire city of Istanbul.

Another recent philanthropist figure from our history is Abdulhamid Khan II. His "Hamidiye fountains" are still among the best quality spring waters.

Our ancestors sincerely established numerous pious foundations, for which they prayed would serve until Judgment Day. These foundations not only met the needs of people in their time, but most of them still offer and will offer their help to today's generation in every field of welfare services. They are traces of the Ottoman ancestor's faith, nobility and continuous charity for which they will always be remembered.

O Allah! Make us among the devoted Muslims, who serve creation for the love of their Creator and who duly take care of Your trusts.

Amin!



*“...but
righteousness
is this that
one should
believe in
Allah and the
last day and
the angels and
the Book and
the prophets,
and give away
wealth out of
love for Him
to the near
of kin and
the orphans
and the
needy and the
wayfarer and
the beggars
and for (the
emancipation
of) the
captives, and
keep up prayer
and pay the
poor-rate
”(Qur'an 2: 177)*

*From The Apex
Of Islamic Civilization*



"Charity and Its Methods"

Chapter Two

- Means of Mercy and Blessing in the
World and in the Hereafter -

ZAKĀT AND INFĀQ

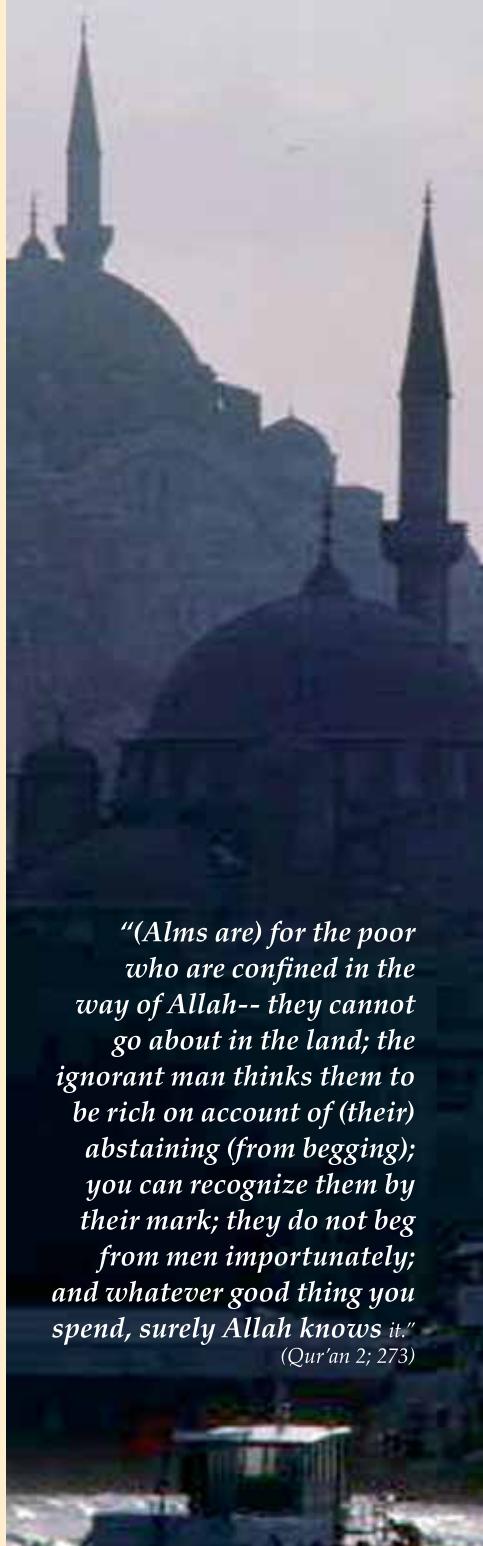
A – ZAKĀT

Human beings are the most distinguished among creation. The diversity among the members of the society like strong and weak, healthy and sick, learned and ignorant, rich and poor are matters which ensure harmony and congruity in the society.

Wealth and poverty represent the two very important and opposite economic levels of social categories. The state of being wealthy or impoverished is actually a means of trial in this world. Wealth per se does not mean excellence, and poverty is not a reason of abjection. Their states are judged according to the rich's and the poor's will and behavior. Wealth and poverty are just Divine will based on Divine wisdom. Allah states:

"Will they distribute the mercy of your Lord? We distribute among them their livelihood in the life of this world, and We have exalted some of them

*"(Alms are) for the poor
who are confined in the
way of Allah-- they cannot
go about in the land; the
ignorant man thinks them to
be rich on account of (their)
abstaining (from begging);
you can recognize them by
their mark; they do not beg
from men importunately;
and whatever good thing you
spend, surely Allah knows it."*
(Qur'an 2; 273)





*Thankful
rich and
patient and
self-respect-
ing poor
are together
in human
dignity and
Divine con-
tentment.*

above others in degrees, that some of them may take others in subjection; and the mercy of your Lord is better than what they amass.” (43: 32)

As it is stated in this verse, Divine distribution of the wealth manifested itself differently for each person. On the other hand each person’s liability is in the extent of the blessings bestowed upon him. In this way social balance and Divine Justice are established in their perfect sense.

Zakāt, which prevents the rich from possible unruliness as a result of yielding themselves to wealth and prevents the poor from hating and being jealous of the rich, is an obligation upon Muslims. It contains several benefits. It ensures peace and tranquility in the society and binds the members of the society to each other. By minimizing the economic differences between the rich and poor, the Islamic economic and social order aims to prevent these differences from becoming a social conflict. Hence great emphasis has been laid on *zakāt* and charity in Islam.

The rich will be questioned before Allah the Almighty about how one earned and spent his wealth, whether he earned it through licit or illicit means, and whether he had paid his duty of *zakāt* and charity. He is being tested with his wealth. Only when this test is passed, along with others, can the Divine pleasure and blessings of Paradise be attained.

And the poor will be questioned on impatience, complaints, being a burden on others, unnecessary wishes, grudges, envy, mutiny, and whether he/she has conserved the obligatory morals of an impoverished being. If the consequences deserve

Allah's pleasure, one's suffering in this world will turn into eternal blessings in the Hereafter.

Zakāt is mentioned in the Holy Qur'an twenty seven times together with prayer, which is enough to show it's significance. In chapter Mu'minun verses 2 and 4, in which prayer is mentioned separately, it is stated that praying Muslims are also those who pay their *zakāts*. This is because prayer is the primal physical act of worship, while *zakāt* is the primal monetary act of worship. Although each acts of worship will be questioned separately, in other words not performing one of them will not affect the other, the Prophet (pbuh) says:

"There is no benefit in the prayers of those who pray without paying their zakāt" (Haythami, Majma' al-Zawa'id, III, 62). Without doubt this hadith encourages Muslims to pay their *zakāt* and shows them its significance.

Because of its great significance, commander of the faithful Abu Bakr (r.a.) considered those who denied its obligatoriness amounts to disbelief, even though they were performing their prayers, and declared war at them. Because *zakāt* is the rich's debt to the needy determined by Allah the Almighty. It is mentioned in the Qur'an:

وَفِي أَمْوَالِهِمْ حَقٌّ لِّلْسَائِلِ وَالْمَحْرُومِ

"And in their property was a portion due to him who begs and to him who is denied (good)." (51; 19)

Messenger of Allah (pbuh) says:



The Prophet (pbuh) stated that real affluence is not the abundance of property but it is the affluence in the heart.



Human beings are the most distinguished among creation. The diversity among the members of the society like strong and weak, healthy and sick, learned and ignorant, rich and poor are matters which ensure harmony and congruity in the society.)

“When you pay your zakāt, you fulfill your due share (or right of the poor upon you).”

In this respect, *zakāt* means giving a part of one's possessions to specified recipients, determined by the Shariah, if a person's wealth exceeds a specified amount. By paying *zakāt* the rest of the possessions become licit. The money or property collected as *zakāt* is distributed to the needy of the society according to their level of need, creating equality, justice, and social harmony, and purification of the wealth of the rich.

If the property is earned through lawful ways, then it becomes lawful for the owner. However, if *zakāt*, which is the right of the poor, is not paid out of it, then it will not be completely lawful. On the other hand, if property is earned through an unlawful way, then even paying its *zakāt* does not make it licit. For instance winning money from gambling or from any other illicit means does not transform the winnings into licit earnings.

Individual and social wisdom of *zakāt*

Benefits of *zakāt* for those who pay it are much more than its benefits for the needy of the society. In fact *zakāt*, which means “cleanness” and “purity”, consists of very important benefits such as healing some diseases of the heart and purifying it from evil and cleaning the property. Purifying the souls is also one of the wisdoms behind sending Prophets.

When analyzing the meanings of the terms “*zakāt*” and “*infāq*”, we understand that the

underlying wisdom in this act of worship is to prevail over the material world and save the human soul from becoming its slave.

It also strengthens the ties of love and sincerity between the donor and the recipient. *Zakāt* is the minimum amount given to the needy. In addition, Muslims who have perfected their faith adorn their wealth with charity, *infāq* and altruism.

Conflict between the rich and the poor has existed throughout history, mainly with the poor hating and begrudging the rich, and the rich despising the poor because of their misery. This has not been the case when characteristics, such as altruism, mercy, compassion and brotherhood, have been reflected in the social life through different ways of charity. From the perspective of Islam, the poor are not considered a class to be despised, but a class who needs and deserves love and respect. They are even thought to be a source of blessing and prosperity. Allah the Almighty commands to the Prophet (pbuh) to be together with the poor Companions and to look after them in the following verse:

“And withhold yourself with those who call on their Lord morning and evening desiring His goodwill, and let not your eyes pass from them, desiring the beauties of this world’s life; and do not follow him whose heart We have made unmindful to Our remembrance, and he follows his low desires and his case is one in which due bounds are exceeded.” (18; 28)



“Allah helps this nation because of the invocations, the prayers, and sincerity of their weak.” (Nasai, Jihad, 43)



"And spend out of what We have given you before death comes to one of you, so that he should say: My Lord! why didst Thou not respite me to a near term, so that I should have given alms and been of the doers of good deeds?"
(Qur'an 63; 10)

It is also mentioned that they are sources of blessings and prosperity in the following tradition of the Prophet (pbuh):

Abu al-Darda (may Allah be pleased with him) narrates that the Prophet (pbuh) said: *"Call for me the weak! Because you will only be sustained and helped by (the prayers and blessings of) your weak."* (Bukhari, *Jihad*, 76)

The Prophet (pbuh) says:

"Allah helps this nation for the invocations, the prayers, and sincerity of their weak." (Nasai, *Jihad*, 43)

According to the narration of Umayya b. Khalid (r.a.), the Prophet (pbuh) used to ask from Allah the Almighty to bestow victory to Muslims for the sake of the weak. (See Tabarani, *Mujam al-Kabir*, I, 292)

If everybody paid their *zakāt* fully, it is obvious that the number of poor and destitute people in the society would decrease considerably. In fact governors during the ruling of caliph Omar b. Abd al-Aziz informed the caliph that "they could not find anybody to give *zakāt*", and asked his advice for what to do. It was because the rich were fully paying their *zakāt*. This state of the society was the manifestation of giving lives and possessions for the sake of Allah the Almighty.

Again Omar b. Abd al-Aziz hired town criers to announce:

"Where are the debtors? Where are the needy, the orphan, the poor who want to get married, where are the destitute? O holders of a right and the needy! Come and get your rights." Spiritual power affecting the success of Omar b. Abd al-Aziz should not be forgotten. In

fact, following assessments about his spiritual world, in a way, displays the causes of great achievement during his ruling.

His wife Fatimah narrates:

“One day I went into the presence of Omar b. Abd al-Aziz. He was sitting in the mosque, crying, and tears were rolling down his cheeks. I asked him what the problem was, and he said:

“Fatimah! I carry the weight of the nation on my shoulders. The hungry, the poor, the sick who cannot find medicine, the needy who do not have clothing to wear, the orphan, the widow who were left alone, the destitute who cannot seek their rights, captives and Muslims who have to live in the lands of unbelievers, the old who do not have the strength to work for their needs, poor heads of families who are responsible for many family members... I feel overwhelmed under my burden when I think of my brothers and sisters in near and far away lands. Tomorrow what if my Lord questions me about them? What if the Messenger of Allah (pbuh) reprimands me, how am I going to respond?” (Ibn Kathir, *Tafsir*, IX, 201)

Sayings narrated by Omar b. Abd al-Aziz's wife Fatimah should be in the minds and hearts of every believing Muslims. The way to adorn a believer's heart with mercy, sympathy, tenderness and compassion is through giving life and possessions for the sake of Allah. The Prophet (pbuh) advised a Companion who had complained about hardness in his heart:



“If you would like to soften your heart, feed the poor, caress the heads of the orphan...”
(Ahmad b. Hanbal,
Musnad, II, 263)



“Regardless of the amount of possessions one owns, it is in the nature of human beings to want more, executing greed and ambition. However Muslims who are accustomed to paying their zakāt have generous hearts.”

“If you would like to soften your heart, feed the poor, caress the heads of the orphan...” (Ahmad b. Hanbal, *Musnad*, II, 263)

Mawlana (q.s.) says in respect to the spiritual gains achieved by caring for the poor and the needy:

“Souls drown in poverty and need look like a house filled with smoke. Open a window to that smoke filled house by hearing their needs and finding a remedy for them, so its smoke clears away, and your heart and soul get soften...”

While Islam has demonstrated a way to reconcile issues between the rich and the poor in such a delicate way, un-Islamic systems have not been able to achieve this goal, and they have exaggerated it one way or another. In fact some systems forbade completely asking from others, and others allowed it completely. Islam, on the other hand, has wisely approached this social problem and offered the most proper remedy through *zakāt* and *infāq*.

Zakāt is one of the most important values that Islam has given humanity. With the help of *zakāt*, needs of the poor, the wayfarer, the orphan and the widows are taken care of. Islam is the religion that removed the chains of slavery from the neck of the humanity. Without a doubt, another solution offered by Islam to emancipate and to bestow upon slaves is its command to provide similar life standards to the life standards of their masters. As a result, instead of providing benefits, owning a slave became a burden on their masters. Islam encouraged the masters who still want to own slaves to emancipate them for

different reasons. Sometimes Islam primarily states emancipation as an atonement for sins.

Islam aids people who are in need without expecting anything in return and ameliorates the wounds. Islam also forbids usury which when looked at outwardly appears as a convenience, but in reality it is just abusing people who are in desperate need. For a usurer wants others to be in trouble and benefit from their despair. Permission to give *zakāt* to debtors is one of the precautions protecting people in debt to fall into the swamp of usury. People who pay *zakāt* share the problems of the deprived. His only wish is to help those in need for the sake of Allah the Almighty.

Regardless of the amount of possessions one owns, it is in the nature of human beings to want more, executing greed and ambition. However Muslims who are accustomed to paying their *zakāt* have generous hearts. They are content with little possession, whereas the usurer seeks to increase his wealth at the risk and devastation of others. It is possible to see similar cases in almost every trade center in the world. It is stated in a verse:

يَمْحُقُ اللَّهُ الرِّبَا وَيُرْبِي الصَّدَقَاتِ

“Allah does not bless usury, and He causes charitable deeds to prosper...” (2: 276)

In other words, Allah the Almighty removes blessings from the usurer's wealth. This unblessed state of the usurer means bankruptcy in Hereafter. This bankruptcy may sometimes occur in this world,



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and huge amounts of unearned wealth might be lost after an illness or a disaster; or it might fall into the hands of an extravagant heir.

Another secret hidden in *zakāt* and *infāq* is to prevent the accumulation of the wealth in the hands of a few, and to prevent the poor from exploitation, therefore avoiding grudge towards the affluent. If wealth becomes a means of pride and arrogance, the fate of the rich would really be pitiful. It should not be forgotten that all the members of the society, whether rich or poor, are in need of each other spiritually as well as materially. This Divine order contains numerous lessons and wisdom.

In Islam, all wealth belongs to Allah the Almighty. Owning possessions in this world is like a timeshare. At a certain point in time, every human being must turn over his/her possessions to others before departing from this world.

This fact is stated in the following verse:

*“Wise
servants
of Allah
never forget
that “there
will be
questioning
for the licit,
and there
will be
punishment
for the
illicit.”*

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ أَنْتُمُ الْفُقَرَاءُ إِلَى اللَّهِ
وَاللَّهُ هُوَ الْغَنِيُّ الْحَمِيدُ

“O men! You are they who stand in need of Al-lah, and Allah is He Who is the Self-sufficient, the Praised One.” (35; 15)

وَلِلَّهِ مُلْكُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ
وَاللَّهُ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ

“And Allah’s is the kingdom of the heavens and the earth, and Allah has power over all things.”
(3; 189)

As it is understood from the verses above, wealth neither belongs to individuals nor to society. Property actually belongs to Allah the Almighty. For humans live in the sovereignty of Allah the Almighty, and are fed by His sustenance. The only thing given to humans is the right to use the property for a temporary period of time.

A poet expresses this as follows:

Entire humanity are passengers; world is a guest-house

*No residents can be found; such an amazing palace
Final possession will be a shroud for the shah and the poor*

Now what are those who are conceited with that, if they aren't insane

Property, possession and status in the society are among the the most difficult tests for human beings. The time came for the legendary reign of Solomon (pbuh) to be taken out of his hands, and it was returned to him only after he had repented. One of the friends of Allah, who learned from this and similar occurrences, said:

“Do not run behind the sustenance, but run behind the Sustainer!”



Wealth neither belongs to individuals nor to society. Property actually belongs to Allah the Almighty. For humans live in the sovereignty of Allah the Almighty, and are fed by His sustenance.



The tragic end for those who neglect the duties of *zakāt*

As we mentioned before, wealth has been entrusted to his servants by Allah the Almighty. If wealth is used against Divine commands, it is prone to easily spoil humans, and to drag them into pride, tyranny, and injustice. Love of possession settles into the hearts of those who were exposed to this catastrophe. The reason for Allah the Almighty to call only possession and progeny as "*fitnah* (sedition)" is based upon the danger that they may penetrate the hearts and become idols. Allah the Almighty warns those who fall into this misfortune:

"O you who believe! most surely many of the doctors of law and the monks eat away the property of men falsely, and turn (them) from Allah's way; and (as for) those who hoard up gold and silver and do not spend it in Allah's way, announce to them a painful chastisement, On the day when it shall be heated in the fire of hell, then their foreheads and their sides and their backs shall be branded with it; this is what you hoarded up for yourselves, therefore taste what you hoarded." (9: 34-35)

Messenger of Allah (pbuh) says:

"There is never a day wherein servants (of Allah) get up at morn, but are not visited by two angels. One of them says: O Allah, give him more who spends (for the sake of Allah), and the other says: O Allah, bring destruction to one who withholds."

"Do not run behind the sustenance, but run behind the Sustainer!"

In another tradition, the Prophet (pbuh) heralds those who pay their *zakāt*, tithe, and give in charity,

while he gives an engrossing warning about those who show heedlessness by being stingy:

“Generosity is a heavenly tree, with its roots in Paradise and its branches in this world. Those of you who have generosity will adhere to one of those branches, and that branch will carry him to Paradise. As for stinginess, that is a tree with its roots in Hell and its branches in this world. Whoever clings to one of those branches by being thrifty, it will carry him to Hell.” (Bayhaki, *Shuab al-Iman*, VII, 435).

In other words, in the verses from the Qur'an and in the traditions of the Prophet (pbuh), it is stated that when love for property invades the heart and when the rights of the needy are usurped, there will be a sorrowful end awaiting. Believers should think about this Divine warning and they should make every effort to give charity, in addition to the obligatory 2.5 percent of one's income offered in *zakāt*. In this regard, Allah the Almighty guides His Servants as follows:

وَيَسْأَلُونَكَ مَاذَا يُنْفِقُونَ قُلِ الْعَفْوُ

“...And they ask you as to what they should spend. Say: What you can spare...” (2:219)

The Companions (may Allah be pleased with them) were always campaigning for charity. Omar (r.a.) donated half of his property for the battle of Tabuk while Abu Bakr (r.a.) donated all of his property. When the Prophet (pbuh) asked him:

“What have you left for your family and children?”



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Allah the
Almighty.
Owning
possessions
in this world
is like a
timeshare.
At a certain
point in
time, every
human being
must turn
over his/her
possessions
to others
before
departing
from this
world.*



He responded “*Allah and His Messenger*” (Abu Dawud, *Zakāt*, 40)

The following event between Sheikh Shibli and a jurist is very educating.

A jurist asked Sheikh Shibli (q.s.) how much of the property should be given in charity, just to test him. Sheikh Shibli said:

“Would you like me to answer according to jurists or according to the friends of Allah?”

The jurists said:

“According to both” Shibli answered:

“According to the jurists, one needs to give 5 dirhams for 200 dirhams after a year passes over the possession of it. According to the way of the friends of Allah, one needs to give the whole 200 dirhams and then he should thank Allah for saving him.”

The jurists said:

“We have learned the rule of our school (to give 2.5 percent of the property) from our scholars.”

Shibli responded:

“We have learned our way from Abu Bakr, the truthful. He gave everything he owned to the Messenger of Allah.

The Messenger of Allah, who indoctrinated his Companions with the love of charity for the sake of Allah the Almighty, provided the best example of philanthropy.

*“Then,
shall ye be
questioned
that Day
about the
joy (ye
indulged
in!).”*
(*Qur'an* 102; 8)

On one occasion the Prophet's family slaughtered a sheep and distributed its meat. The Prophet (pbuh) asked: "Is there anything left from the meat?"

Aisha (May Allah be pleased with her) said:

"Just a shoulder bone is left to us"

"So then all of it became ours except that shoulder bone!" (Tirmidhi, *Sifat al-Qiyamah*, 35)

The Prophet (pbuh) could not feel comfortable when he had some gold pieces at home, and he would immediately donate them. However, he would not expect everybody to do the same; he would advise and direct his Companions to do their best. For instance while he accepted Abu Bakr's entire wealth as charity, he said to another Companion:

"Keep some of your wealth for yourself, as it will be better for you"

In other words Islam leaves the amount of voluntary charity in addition to the obligatory and fixed sum of *zakāt* to the discretion of the wealthy. Acting upon this principle, Abu Dhar (r.a.) didn't approve to leave the excess amount of his wealth to the next day, while Abdurrahman b. Awf (r.a.) considered it appropriate to save some wealth, in consideration of the future needs. He on the one hand worked hard to earn more and on the other hand did everything he could to ease the problems of other Muslims. While he was wandering around hungry, he would feed the others. Because, he and other Companions like him were people who adorned their souls by being conscious of that they were just trustees of their wealth.



"Generosity is a heavenly tree, with its roots in Paradise and its branches in this world. Those of you who have generosity will adhere to one of those branches, and that branch will carry him to Paradise. As for stinginess, that is a tree with its roots in Hell and its branches in this world. Whoever clings to one of those branches by being thrifty, it will carry him to Hell."
(Bayhaki, Shuab al-Iman, VII, 435)



"I am afraid that worldly wealth will be given to you in abundance as it was given to those (nations) before you, and you will start competing each other for it as the previous nations competed for it, and then it will divert you (from good) as it diverted them."

(See Muslim, Zakat, 121; Bukhari, Riqaq, 7)

All the wealthy who seek the eternal salvation need to live in this world with consciousness that they are trustees and they will be questioned by the real owner of the wealth, or Allah the Almighty. In a verse:

ثُمَّ لَتُسْأَلُنَّ يَوْمَئِذٍ عَنِ النَّعِيمِ

"Then on that day you shall most certainly be questioned about the boons." (102; 8)

Because of this fact, wise servants of Allah never forget that "there will be questioning for the licit, and there will be punishment for the illicit."

That is why the rich who are slaves of their endless desires and who do not give charity are like carriers of fuel to the bathhouse furnace.

Working and acquiring wealth through licit ways is something that Islam promotes and encourages. As long as wealth does not transform into a form of idolatry in the hearts and it is spent for the sake of Allah. Otherwise, wealth becomes a burden in this world and a reason for a severe punishment in the Hereafter.

The right goal for the wealth is to realize the meaning of the tradition "the best among you are those who are most useful to other people." (Suyuti, *al-Jami' al-Saghir*, II, 8) The place for money should be the wallets, not the hearts. A wise poet's following lines eloquently states the heedlessness of the humans:

*Lowly world is a guesthouse
In it, palaces and ruins are the same
I am in a desperate love for this world
I built a house in the guesthouse*

It should be known that prayers of the weak and the poor are sources of peace for the strong and the affluent. Their prayers are also spiritual help for the wealthy. It should also be known that poverty and indigence do not mean abasement and degradation, maybe just a manifestation of a blessing and wisdom in the Hereafter.

Thankful rich and patient and self-respecting poor are together in human dignity and Divine contentment. Islam disparages both arrogant and stingy rich and conceited poor. The Prophet (pbuh) prayed:

“Dear Lord! I seek refuge in Thee from the evil of the trial of the affluence and from the evil of the trial of poverty” (Muslim, *Dhikr*, 49)

Then whoever has nice attributes, such as contentment, trust in Allah, and submission becomes the real affluent.

That is why every servant who would like to attain Divine grace and conduct has to share the blessings bestowed upon him with the needy and the bereft. The goal is to attain Allah’s contentment by being a Muslim from whom everybody benefits and everybody is safe from the harm of his tongue and hand. *Zakāt* is the practical manifestation of the gratitude for property and wealth. Allah the Almighty promises that gratitude will multiply His blessings:

“...If you are grateful, I would certainly give to you more, and if you are ungrateful, My chastisement is truly severe.” (14; 7)



On one occasion the Prophet’s family slaughtered a sheep and distributed its meat. The Prophet (pbuh) asked: “Is there anything left from the meat?”

Aisha (May Allah be pleased with her) said:

“Just a shoulder bone is left to us”

“So then all of it became ours except that shoulder bone!”

(Tirmidhi, Sifat al-Qiyamah, 35)



Our beloved Prophet loved charity and he encouraged his Companions to be charitable. In a Hadith Qudsi (sacred tradition where the Prophet (pbuh) directly quotes God saying), it is stated that:

“Spend (in charity), for then I will compensate you (generously).” (Bukhari, *Tawhid*, 35).

Instead of repenting for what they have done, If those who are negligent about *zakāt* and charity say “I have worked and earned” and despise the needy, they will certainly face the same sorrowful end as Qarun.

Qarun, who had once been a poor but a righteous person, got very rich by the science of alchemy that Moses (pbuh) had taught him. However, because he could not protect his heart from mundane desires and tendencies, he lost his kind and decent attributes. He became arrogant because of his wealth. According to the Qur'an he became one of the insolents, and Divine ruling about him was as follows:

“Surely Qarun was of the people of Musa, but he rebelled against them, and We had given him of the treasures, so much so that his hoards of wealth would certainly weigh down a company of men possessed of great strength. When his people said to him: Do not exult, surely Allah does not love the exultant;” (28; 76)

However, Qarun closed his ears both to these and other warnings of Moses (pbuh). When Moses (pbuh) asked him to pay his *zakāt*, although he owed his wealth to Moses, he even said: “Do you have an eye on my wealth? I earned it!”

“Spend (in charity), for then I will compensate you (generously).”
(Bukhari, *Tawhid*, 35)

This incident is narrated in the Qur'an as follows:

"And seek by means of what Allah has given you the future abode, and do not neglect your portion of this world, and do good (to others) as Allah has done good to you, and do not seek to make mischief in the land, surely Allah does not love the mischief-makers."

"He said: I have been given this only on account of the knowledge I have. Did he not know that Allah had destroyed before him of the generations those who were mightier in strength than he and greater in assemblage? And the guilty shall not be asked about their faults."

"So he went forth to his people in his finery. Those who desire this world's life said: O would that we had the like of what Qarun is given; most surely he is possessed of mighty good fortune."

"And those who were given the knowledge said: Woe to you! Allah's reward is better for him who believes and does good, and none is made to receive this except the patient"

"Thus We made the earth to swallow up him and his abode; so he had no body of helpers to assist him against Allah nor was he of those who can defend themselves."

"And those who yearned for his place only the day before began to say: Ah! (know) that Allah amplifies and straitens the means of subsistence for whom He pleases of His servants; had not Allah been gracious to us, He would most surely



"... If you are grateful, I would certainly give to you more..."

(Qur'an 14: 7)



*Rumi says:
 "What is
 happening to
 the humans as
 they become
 slaves of gold
 and property?
 What is
 wealth if it
 is not spent
 in the path
 of Allah?
 What does
 it represent?
 What could
 being a
 slave of the
 world and
 derogation
 of crawling
 like a snake
 in front of its
 gate be, if it is
 not a reason
 for misery
 sending man
 to the heavens
 empty
 handed?"*

have abased us; ah! (know) that the ungrateful are never successful." (28; 77-82)

The aforementioned story is a great example exhibiting the fate for those whose hearts are inclined towards wealth, and forget the Hereafter. For Qarun, who lost Divine richness and blessings, is now a beggar in the Hereafter. Because, the abode of the Hereafter belongs to the pious who live the life of a righteous and sincere servant. It is stated in a verse:

"(As for) that future abode, We assign it to those who have no desire to exalt themselves in the earth nor to make mischief and the good end is for those who guard (against evil)." (28; 83)

Astonished by their state, Mawlana Jalaladdin Rumi (q.s.) talks about those who desire worldly gains and bankrupt in the Hereafter:

"What is happening to the humans as they become slaves of gold and property? What is wealth if it is not spent in the path of Allah? What does it represent? What could being a slave of the world and derogation of crawling like a snake in front of its gate be, if it is not a reason for misery sending man to the heavens empty handed?"

Just like Qarun, who was a slave of wealth, the story of Sa'labah is a thought provoking and exemplary one. Sa'labah, a Medinan Muslim, had great ambition for wealth. He wanted to be rich, and he asked the Prophet (pbuh) to pray for him to become rich. The Prophet (pbuh) responded: "Little wealth which you can be grateful is better than plentiful one which you cannot be thankful..."

Upon the Prophet's words, he gave up his wish for a while but later his desire recurred and he returned to the Prophet (pbuh) with the same request:

“O Messenger of Allah! Pray for me to become rich.”

This time the Prophet (pbuh) said:

“Am I not a good enough example for you? By Allah, If I had asked, those mountains would have transformed into gold and silver and follow me, but I didn't ask.”

Sa'labah changed his mind again. But his desires did not cease. He was saying to himself: “If I get rich, I could help the poor and I could get more reward from Allah Almighty.” Then he went to the Prophet for a third time and said:

“I swear by the name of the One who sent you as His messenger, if I get rich, I will protect the poor and the needy, and I will give everybody whatever their right is.”

In response to Sa'labah's constant requests, the Prophet (pbuh) prayed for him:

“Dear Lord! Bestow upon Sa'labah the worldly wealth he asks.”

Not much later after the Prophet's prayer, Allah the Almighty bestowed upon Sa'labah great wealth. His herds filled the meadows. But Sa'labah who was hitherto called “mosque bird” began slacking off when it came time for the congregational prayers. He began only attending the Friday prayer, and finally he left the congregational prayers altogether.



The place for money is not the heart but the wallet.



“And seek by means of what Allah has given you the future abode, and do not neglect your portion of this world, and do good (to others) as Allah has done good to you, and do not seek to make mischief in the land, surely Allah does not love the mischief-makers.”
(Qur'an 28; 77)

On one occasion when the Prophet (pbuh) learned what had happened to Sa'labah, he said:

“What a pity what had happened to Sa'labah!”

This was not all of Sa'labah's heedlessness and ignorance. He even told the clerks who came to collect *zakāt*:

“What you are trying to do is clear extortion.” Let alone giving the charity he had promised, he even refused to pay the obligatory rights of the poor, and so he became a hypocrite. This kind of behavior of hypocrites is stated in a verse as follows:

“And there are those of them who made a covenant with Allah: If He give us out of His grace, we will certainly give alms and we will certainly be of the good.”

“But when He gave them out of His grace, they became niggardly of it and they turned back and they withdrew.” (9; 75-76)

Because of his own idiocy, he didn't listen to the Prophet's (pbuh) warnings and deserved to be afflicted with a pitiful fate. Deceived by the temporary pleasures of this world, Sa'labah lost the eternal blessings of the Hereafter. When he was dying in regret, the Prophet's (pbuh) words: *“Little wealth which you can be grateful for is better than plentiful wealth which you cannot be thankful for...”* were resonating in his ears.

As it is observed, human beings, by nature, are inclined to the material world. Those who are deceived by its glamor are impossible to satisfy. The Messenger of Allah (pbuh) expresses this reality:

“If the son of Adam (the human being) had two valleys of gold, he would wish for a third, for nothing can fill the belly of Adam’s son except dust. And Allah forgives he who repents.” (Bukhari, *Riqāq*, 10)



Human beings are the only creatures given free will, as opposed to the flora and fauna whose nature it is to submit to the will of God. Humans can choose between right and wrong, they can make decisions and essentially choose to deny God or worship Him. It is important to understand the nature of human beings in its most mundane form – the carnal appetite, the ego or *nāfs*. Islam promotes everything in moderation, because anything in its extremity can be disasterous. Therefore, as one’s wealth accumulates, there is a tendency to become greedy. Individuals who are filled with greed naturally lose their compassion and mercy towards others. They may even fool themselves with empty promises about donating to the poor after becoming rich. Yet, they are sick and suffer from diseased hearts. They will be included among the miserable mentioned in the saying *“those who say ‘I will do it tomorrow’ are perished.”*

The aforementioned story about Sa’labah is an excellent example for us to comprehend the grievous end not only of those who are deceived by worldly wealth, but also of those who force the fate and don’t observe the manners of praying. Our responsibility is to ask from Allah to accept our prayers if it is beneficial for us, instead of insisting and putting too much trust in our intellect and asking things that we don’t know whether are good or bad for us. Otherwise we might cause ourselves problems that

The Prophet (pbuh) said:
“Little wealth which you can be grateful is better than plentiful one which you cannot be thankful...”
*(Tabari, *Jami’ al-Bayan*, XIV, 370, 372)*



"If the son of Adam (the human being) had two valleys of gold, he would wish for a third, for nothing can fill the belly of Adam's son except dust. And Allah forgives he who repents."
(Bukhari, Riqāq, 10)

will prevent us from seeing the blessings buried under our charity does. However, it is impossible to figure out just by our weak minds how exactly prayer works. Prayer is Allah's permission, his blessing and even his order for us. It is a religious fact that prayer drives away the troubles, however we cannot know what is good and what is bad for us; thus we should not insist in our prayers that something is in our advantage instead we need to say in our prayers that:

"O Lord! Bestow it upon us if it is good for us."

As it can be observed in order to transform our wealth into benefits we have to use it in accordance with Divine commands. This is essential for the welfare and salvation of the individuals and the society both in this world and in the Hereafter.

Wealth itself is not decried in Islam. On the contrary, if specified guidelines are followed, it is even something to be praised. Our beloved Prophet (pbuh) encourages getting rich in the following saying:

"What a beautiful thing is the lawful and useful wealth in the hands of the righteous servants." (Ahmad b. Hanbal, Musnad, 202)

Asking for help from other people while having the strength to work is also among the behavior condemned by Islam.

In fact according to the narration by Anas b. Malik, a man of the Ansar came to the Prophet (pbuh) and begged from him.

He (the Prophet) asked: Have you nothing in your house? He replied: Yes, a piece of cloth, a part of which we wear and a part of which we spread

(on the ground), and a wooden bowl from which we drink water.

He said: Bring them to me. He then brought these articles to him and he (the Prophet) took them in his hands and asked: Who will buy these? A man said: I shall buy them for one dirham. He said twice or thrice: Who will offer more than one dirham? A man said: I shall buy them for two dirhams.

He gave these to him and took the two dirhams and, giving them to the Ansari, he said: Buy food with one of them and hand it to your family, and buy an axe and bring it to me. He then brought it to him. The Apostle of Allah (pbuh) fixed a handle on it with his own hands and said: Go, gather firewood and sell it, and do not let me see you for a fortnight. The man went away and gathered firewood and sold it. When he had earned ten dirhams, he came to him and bought a garment with some of them and food with the others.

The Apostle of Allah (pbuh) then said:

“This is better for you than that begging should come as a spot on your face on the Day of Judgment. Begging is right only for three people: one who is in grinding poverty, one who is seriously in debt, or one who is responsible for compensation and finds it difficult to pay.”¹¹

Even though Islam does not prohibit begging on the whole, it observes it ethically inappropriate. The Prophet (pbuh) told a man who made begging a habit:

11. See Abu Dawud, *Kitab al-Zakat*, 26



“What a beautiful thing is the lawful and useful wealth in the hands of the righteous servants.”

(Ahmad b. Hanbal,
Musnad, 202)



“Allah the Almighty did not leave the division of the zakāt revenues to anybody, not even to the will and desires of His messengers. He pointed out eight groups for its distribution. If you belong to one of these eight groups, then we can give you your share from it.” (Bayhaki, *Sunan al-Kubra*, VII, 6)

Here is very delicate fastidiousness in regards to distribution of *zakāt* to its appropriate beneficiaries. For *zakāt* can be given only to the groups mentioned in the verse. These groups are stated in the following verse:

“Alms are only for the poor and the needy, and the officials(appointed) over them, and those whose hearts are made to incline (to truth) and the (ransoming of) captives and those in debt and in the way of Allah and the wayfarer; an ordinance from Allah; And Allah is full of knowledge And wisdom.” (9; 60)

Charity given to people other than these eight groups can be done by donations outside the scope of *zakāt* called *khayrāt*. The Prophet (pbuh) did not give *zakāt* money to those who did not belong to the aforementioned eight-group, and refused their requests. But he did not follow the same principle about the charity other than *zakāt*. In those cases he acted in accordance with the verse **“And as for him who asks, do not chide (him),”** (93; 10), and he said:

“It is your good manner that not to drive away a beggar empty handed, but to give him even if all you can give is a single date. O Aisha! do not send a poor man away empty handed, give even if all you can give is half a date.” (Tirmidhi, *Kitab al-Zuhd*, 37)

**“Dear Lord!
I seek refuge
in Thee from
the evil of the
trial of the
affluence and
from the evil
of the trial of
poverty”**

(Muslim, *Dhikr*, 49)

In accordance with the meaning of this hadith, Musa Topbas (may Allah bless his soul) used to give charity to beggars, and say:

"In order that we do not become accustomed to refusing the needy, we should give even if it is a small amount"

It should also be known that Islam approves begging only under extreme circumstances; because, begging is a very humiliating and degrading action. That is why the Prophet (pbuh) asked from those who wanted to pledge allegiance not beg people of anything.¹²

In this way we should distinguish those who ask money from anybody they met and the needy who are too bashful to tell their needs to others. In this respect the Prophet (pbuh) says:

"The poor man (miskin) is not the one who goes round to the people and is dismissed with one or two morsels, and one or two dates. They (the Prophet's Companions) said: Messenger of Allah, then who is a miskin? He said: He who does not get enough to satisfy him, and he is not considered so (as to elicit the attention of the benevolent people), so that charity way be given to him, and he does not beg anything from people." (Muslim, *Kitab al-zakāt*, 102)

By this hadith, the Prophet (pbuh) wanted to say that those who ask from anybody they met would eventually get what they need. The real needy ones are those who hide their state, be patient and endure the hardship of poverty. The significance of helping this kind of needy is stated in the Qur'an:



"It is your good manner that not to drive away a beggar empty handed, but to give him even if all you can give is a single date. O Aisha! do not send a poor man away empty handed, give even if all you can give is half a date."

(Tirmidhi, *Kitab al-Zuhd*, 37)

12. See Muslim, *Kitab al-Zakat*, 108.



“(Alms are) for the poor who are confined in the way of Allah-- they cannot go about in the land; the ignorant man thinks them to be rich on account of (their) abstaining (from begging); you can recognize them by their mark; they do not beg from men importunately; and whatever good thing you spend, surely Allah knows it.” (2: 273)

Zakāt on Agricultural Produces: ‘Ushr (Tithe)

‘Ushr which is among the monetary acts of worship that has a tendency to be forgotten. It is the type of *zakāt* paid with crops. Those who do not pay their ‘ushr are as guilty as the usurper. They seize the right of the poor, the needy and those who fight for the sake of Allah the Almighty.

According to a narration, a generous man from Yemen owned vineyards, date gardens and grain fields near Sana'a. This man used to reserve a generous share for the poor and the needy during harvest time. When he passed away, his children became absorbed in their greed and said to each other:

“We have a large family and our property is little. Let’s not give anything to the poor, and reap the harvest before they come and ask.”

In response to their evil intentions, Allah the Almighty burned their gardens down and transformed them into ruins. This big garden was unrecognizable. When the stingy owners saw this scene, they were shocked. They thought that they had entered the wrong place.

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*“In order
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we should
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it is a small
amount”*

However, it was because of the prayers of the poor for their father, their father's garden had been receiving abundant blessings. All poor and all people in need had been benefiting from that garden. But the 'ushr paid to the poor looked like too much to the children of the generous man, and they didn't want to pay it. They were not aware of where their garden's substances were coming from, because heedlessness had blinded their eyes.

That is why Allah the Almighty says: "**...and be not thou of those who are unheedful.**" (7; 205). The incident known as the story of the Companions of Darwan is stated in the Qur'an as follows:

"Surely We will try them as We tried the owners of the garden, when they swore that they would certainly cut off the produce in the morning."

"And were not willing to set aside a portion (for the poor)."

"Then there encompassed it a visitation from your Lord while they were sleeping."

"So it became as black, barren land."

"And they called out to each other in the morning,"

"Saying: Go early to your tilth if you would cut (the produce)."

"So they went, while they consulted together secretly,"

"Saying: No poor man shall enter it today upon you."



*"Shaitan threatens you with poverty and enjoins you to be niggardly..."
(Qur'an 2; 268)*



Abu Huraira reported Allah's Messenger (pbuh) as saying: Charity does not in any way decrease the wealth and the servant who forgives Allah adds to his respect, and the one who shows humility Allah elevates him in the estimation (of the people).
(Muslim, Kitab al-Birr, 69)

“And in the morning they went, having the power to prevent.”

“But when they saw it, they said: Most surely we have gone astray”

“Nay! we are made to suffer privation.” (68; 17-27)

What a wonderful manifestation of the pitiful states of those who forget Allah the Almighty and those who forget to give the rights of the poor out of substances bestowed by Allah the Almighty. It should not be forgotten that all the intentions in the hearts are known by Allah the Almighty. His Greatness overwhelms everything.

Mawlana Jalaladdin Rumi (May Allah bless his soul) says:

“Life in this world is just a dream. To become wealthy in this world is like finding a treasure in a dream. Worldly possessions pass from one generation to the other and stay in this world.”

“Angel of death awakens the unwary from his sleep. That person groans for the troubles he had to go through for something that he did not actually own. He regrets greatly, but it is too late and it is all over...”

How nicely stated by Ali (may Allah be pleased with him):

“Human beings are in a sleep; they wake up when they die.”

Allah the Almighty also explains the regretful state of a person who wakes up at the time of his death:

رَبِّ لَوْلَا أَخْرَتْنِي إِلَى أَجَلٍ قَرِيبٍ
فَأَصَدَّقَ وَأَكُنْ مِنَ الصَّالِحِينَ



“...he should say: My Lord! why didst Thou not respite me to a near term, so that I should have given alms and been of the doers of good deeds?
(63; 10)

But it will be too late, and his request will not be accepted. That is why Allah the Almighty orders His servants to give charity out of the substance bestowed upon them before encountering such a sorrowful end.

In short every believer should be careful not to neglect their acts of monetary worship. Otherwise he should know that he will be among the heedless who do not know whose wealth they withhold from whom.

O Lord! Bless us by making us among those faithful who excitedly perform their financial services and give the rights of the poor who can or cannot disclose their needs out of their modesty, and bless us by bestowing upon us your contentment.

Amin!



*Mawlana
Jalaladdin
Rumi (May
Allah bless
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B- INFĀQ

a. Its Nature

Words like *infāq* which connote devotion of wealth and life to the path of Allah the Almighty are mentioned in more than two hundred places in the Qur'an. Even this number is enough to comprehend the extent and significance of *infāq*.

In the pact of second Aqabah (*Bay'ah Aqabah*), Abd Allah b. Rawaha (r.a.) said:

“O Messenger of Allah! For your Lord and for yourself you can lay conditions you want.” And the Prophet (pbuh) said:

“My condition for my Lord is that you worship Him and not to attribute partners to Him. And my condition for myself is that you protect me just like you protect yourselves and your wealth.”

The Companions asked:

“What is there for us if we do what you want?”

When the Prophet (pbuh) replied:

“There is heaven for you”, they said:

“What a profitable trade! Neither we will break our promise nor do we want it to be broken.” (Ibn Kathir, *Tafsir*, II, 406)

After this conversation the following verse was revealed:

“The son of Adam claims: My wealth, my wealth. And he (the Holy Prophet) said: O son of Adam. is there anything as your belonging except that which you consumed, which you utilised, or which you wore and then it was worn out or you gave as charity and sent it forward?”
(Muslim, Zuhd, 3-4)

إِنَّ اللَّهَ اشْتَرَى مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ أَنفُسُهُمْ
وَأَمْوَالُهُمْ بِأَنَّ لَهُمُ الْجَنَّةَ



“Surely Allah has bought of the believers their persons and their property for this, that they shall have the garden...” (9; 111)

The most ideal and concrete manifestation of selling ones' life is martyrdom and being a veteran. Islam's first martyr Sumayya's story is an exemplary one. She donated her life in the path of Allah. She bought paradise with her life and she is waiting for the moment when the eternal rewards will be given. We should follow the same path and be ready to give our wealth and our lives in order to attain Allah's contentment.

Again in the Dardanelles War, even though the Turkish army did not have any gunpowder left, they won the battle because, they displayed one of the most concrete manifestations of giving possessions and lives for the sake of Allah. There are many examples of this kind. Selling wealth to Allah is a metaphor which conveys spending the wealth for the sake of Allah. Allah the Almighty mentions the following when counting the attributes of the pious:

“Those who believe in the unseen and keep up prayer and spend out of what We have given them.” (2; 3)

Sadaqa and *infāq*, which are the common terms for charity in Islam, have many kinds. Sadaqa and

“Angel of death awakens the unwary from his sleep. That person groans for the troubles he had to go through for something that he did not actually own. He regrets greatly, but it is too late and it is all over...” Jalal al-Din Rumi



Altruism is the sign of love. Lover makes sacrifices for his beloved in the extent of his love. He considers sacrifice as a pleasure. Sacrifice can even go as much as giving life for the beloved. Giving charity to the creation of Allah the Almighty is the greatest manifestation of love.

infāq starts with giving whatever there is. According to this, even giving half a date is accepted as *infāq* and it saves the donor from the hellfire. The Prophet (pbuh) considered every Muslim rich. Because he taught through his sayings that Muslims' actions such as commanding right and forbidding wrong, helping the oppressed, comforting the faithful, rejoicing the stricken souls, picking up objects in the road that could cause problems to passersby, and visiting the sick etc. can all be considered acts of *infāq*. And these do not depend on the person's financial strength. That means even for the financially weakest believer there are several ways to perform *infāq* and *sadaqa*.

In fact charity is not something undertaken with just wealth. Numerous acts which everybody is able to do such as giving directions, comforting, advising and smiling are among the factors which create a peaceful and tranquil society, and help the sense of brotherhood and solidarity to take root in the society.

Since it maintains the order and the balance of the society, in a way giving charity to the poor and stricken members of the society are causes of blessing both in this world and the Hereafter. The following story is a nice manifestation of this reality.

On one occasion a beggar stood before Ali (r.a.) and asked some things. Ali (may Allah be pleased with him) told his sons, Hasan and Husain (r.a.) to go home and bring the six dirhams they have at home. Hasan and Husain went home and brought the money, and Ali (r.a.) gave it to the beggar, whereas

they needed that money. Fatimah (r.a.) was going to buy flour with it. Later when Ali (r.a.) was on his way home, he met a man wishing to sell his camel. The man sold his camel to Ali (r.a.) for 140 dirhams agreeing to be paid later. Before Ali (r.a.) arrived his home, he met another man who wanted to buy the camel for 200 dirhams in advance.

Ali (r.a.) got the money, paid his 140 dirham debt and gave the remaining 60 dirham to Fatimah. Then he said:

"This is Allah's promise to us when he said "Whoever brings a good deed, he shall have ten like it..." (6; 160) We gave our 6 dirhams and Allah the Almighty rewarded us by ten times of it."

In addition to Allah the Almighty's above-mentioned blessings, according to the verse **"Is the reward of goodness aught but goodness?" (55; 60)** *zakāt* and *infāq* opens the doors of mercy and closes the doors of evil.

The following incident which happened during the peak times of terrorist attacks in the 1970's is quite an exemplary one. Five or six robbers went into a store and asked the store owner to give all the money in the safe. Just as the poor old guy hopelessly got the keys to the safe, the robber who was looking out for the door ran over to him and stood in front of him. He pointed his gun to his friends and shouted:

"We will not steal a single penny from here"

Surprised by his odd behavior, his friends asked:



"The believers are only those who believe in Allah and His Messenger then they doubt not and struggle hard with their wealth and their lives in the way of Allah; they are the truthful ones."
(Qur'an 49; 15)



“What is the matter? We robbed so many stores until now and you said nothing, what happened this time? Get out of our way, and let us do our job.”

But the man who was determined to save the store owner said:

“No. we are not going to take anything from this store. Do not insist. Unless you walk through my dead body, there is nothing for you in this store. Do you know who this man is? For years while I have been drinking alcohol and gambling, this old guy was helping my family and kids. He is an exceptional person who helped my kids to get a proper education.”

Thereupon his friends apologized from the store owner and left the store. This is a very good example of the manifestation of the hadith “little charity drives away many troubles.”

The best examples of helping the poor and wrapping up their wounds can be observed in the life of our beloved Prophet (pbuh). On the one hand he wanted Muslims to transform generosity into a natural habit. He encouraged *infāq* by saying:

“The upper hand is better than the lower hand (i.e. he who gives in charity is better than him who takes it).”
(Bukhari, *Zakāt*, 18)

“Your smile to the face of your brother in Islam is charity”
(Tirmidhi, *Kitab al- Birr*, 36)

“Do not wish to be like anyone except in two cases. (The first is) A person, whom Allah has given wealth and he spends it righteously; (the second is) the one whom Allah has given wisdom (the Holy Qur'an) and he acts according to it and teaches it to others.” (Bukhari, *'Ilm*, 15)

On the other hand he was praying:

“O Lord! Grant me life as a poor man, take my life as a poor man and on Judgment Day resurrect me in the company of the poor.” (Tirmidhi, *Kitab al-Zuhd*, 15) and he reorganized part of his mosque as a shelter for the homeless, poor and needy Companions. He paid close attention to the needs of these Companions, called “Companions of Suffa” and by his modest lifestyle he also became a comfort for them.

Again he said:

“The poor (who will not be worried about to be questioned by wealth in the Hereafter) will enter Paradise half a day (which is equal to 500 worldly years) before the rich.” (Tirmidhi, *Kitab al-Zuhd*, 37)

In another hadith, he pointed out that real dignity is not measured by one’s wealth, but by one’s piousness and righteousness “*Those who increase their wealth (by not giving in charity) are the ones who decrease their reward in the Hereafter*” (Bukhari, *Riqaq*, 13)

He also advised the poor members of his community: “*Protect yourselves from the Fire, even if with one half of a date and he who hasn’t got even this, (should do so) by (saying) a good, pleasant word.*” (Bukhari, *Adab*, 34) and showed that *infāq* is possible in every circumstance. Therefore, if the people who do not have enough wealth to give in charity treat others nicely and talk nicely, this is considered a kind of charity. It is even declared in a verse as better than monetary charity, which is followed by insults:

“Kind speech and forgiveness is better than charity followed by injury; and Allah is Self-sufficient, Forbearing.” (2: 263)



Muslims’ actions such as commanding right and forbidding wrong, helping the oppressed, comforting the faithful, rejoicing the stricken souls, picking up objects in the road that could cause problems to passersby, and visiting the sick etc. can all be considered acts of infāq.



The above mentioned sayings of the Prophet encourage neither poverty nor affluence. On the contrary they show that both sides have good sides of their own and it is necessary for a person to be content and act according to his financial conditions. The important thing is that a servant, whether rich or poor, should live according to Divine contentment.

The Prophet (pbuh) accepted that all believers possessed generosity in their hearts. Even though Abu Dhar (may Allah be pleased with him), one of the Companions of the Prophet, owned nothing in this world, the Prophet (pbuh) used to tell him that:

“O Abā Dhar! When you prepare the broth, add water to that and give that (as a present) to your neighbour.” (Muslim, *Kitab al-Birr*, 142) Because, Abu Dhar could not even afford pulses to put in his soup.

Being poor in the wallet can do no harm to those who are rich in their hearts. If someone is rich in his/her heart along with affluence in his/her wallet, this would increase his generosity. For those who are poor in their hearts, on the other hand, wealth in the wallet cannot do them any good. On the contrary, it intensifies his/her poverty in the heart. And those who are poor both in the wallet and in the heart will be miserable in both worlds.

The Prophet (pbuh) stated that real affluence is not the abundance of property but affluence in the heart.¹³ In this manner everyone's affluence is in the extent of his/her richness in the heart. Contentment,

“No matter how strong the darkness is, a single matchstick is enough to lighten it.”

Jalal al-Din Rumi

13. Ahmad b. Hanbal, *Musnad*, II, 389.

on the other hand, is a boundless treasure as it is stated in the traditions of the Prophet (pbuh),¹⁴ and real believers are those who have this treasure and give in charity. *İnfâq* is the utmost manifestation of the believer's astuteness and responsibility.

When Omar (may Allah be pleased with him) was on his way to Damascus, he was taking turns with his slave to ride his camel. It was his slave's turn, when they arrived at the gates of the city. As a result of Omar's perseverance, he was on foot and his slave was on the camel while they were entering the city. This is another notable manifestation of *infâq* and *ithar* from Islamic history.

Ithar means to take what is ours and give it to others, to prefer others over ourselves and to pass our rights onto others, which is rare in today's society. We need to encourage going beyond obligatory *zakât*. Collection and distribution of charity should be organized by institutions. We should also train an adequate number of staff for these institutions. It is also a significant duty of contemporary society to found hospitals and nursing homes for the needy members of the society.

Inclination to *infâq* should be a natural quality for a Muslim. Allah the Almighty says:

الَّذِينَ يُنْفِقُونَ فِي السَّرَّاءِ وَالضَّرَّاءِ وَالْكَاظِمِينَ
الْغَيْظَ وَالْعَافِينَ عَنِ النَّاسِ وَاللَّهُ يُحِبُّ الْمُحْسِنِينَ

14. Bayhaki, *Kitab al-Zuhd*, II, 88.



“Protect yourselves from the Fire, even if with one half of a date and he who hasn't got even this, (should do so) by (saying) a good, pleasant word.”
(Bukhari, *Adab*, 34)



“Those who spend (benevolently) in ease as well as in adversity, and those who restrain (their) anger and pardon men; and Allah loves the doers of good (to others).” (3; 134)

According to a narrative, Ja’far al-Sadiq (may Allah be pleased with him) had a slave, who helped Ja’far (may Allah be pleased with him) in his personal services. One day the slave accidentally knocked a bowl of soup over Ja’far (may Allah be pleased with him). Ja’far (may Allah be pleased with him) got angry. Upon this the slave said:

“O master! **“Those who restrain their anger”** are praised in the Qur'an and recited a verse.”

Ja’far al-Sadiq (r.a.) told him that he controlled his anger.

Again the slave said:

“Those who forgive the faults are also praised in the same verse and recited the related part of the verse.” Ja’far (may Allah be pleased with him) said:

“Ok I forgive you”

Then the slave told him”

“In the following part of the verse, it is stated that **“Allah loves those who do good”** and he recited the rest of the verse.”

Upon this Ja’far (r.a.) said:

“Ok you may go now. You are free. I am emancipating you for the sake of Allah.”

According to the sayings of the Prophet (pbuh) a sinful woman was forgiven just because she had

*Narrated
Jabir bin
'Abdullah:
The Prophet
said,
"all that is
good is a
Sadaqa."
(Bukhari, Adab, 33)*

given some water to a thirsty dog. On the other hand another woman who left a cat hungry and caused the death of the poor animal was punished in the hellfire. These examples reveal the true state of a believer's heart; therefore, a Muslim should be sensitive, altruistic, generous and merciful.

The acceptable generosity before Allah the Almighty is to give from the best part of the property. If only this nicety is taken into account in charitable actions, then these actions will be means to convey the donor to Divine contentment.

Ashab al-Suffa, who devoted their lives to the path of Islam and do not think other than worshipping Allah the Almighty, could not find time to earn their lives. That is why other Muslims brought them dates to eat. Once some people brought them rotten dates and because Ashab-i Suffa were really hungry, they had no choice but to eat them. Upon this incident the following Divine warning was revealed:

“O you who believe! spend (benevolently) of the good things that you earn and or what We have brought forth for you out of the earth, and do not aim at what is bad that you may spend (in alms) of it, while you would not take it yourselves unless you have its price lowered, and know that Allah is Self-sufficient, Praiseworthy.” (2; 267)

In another verse, Allah the Almighty informs us to give out of the things we like in order to be close to Him:

“By no means shall you attain to righteousness until you spend (benevolently) out of what you



“Those who spend (benevolently) in ease as well as in adversity, and those who restrain (their) anger and pardon men; and Allah loves the doers of good (to others).”
(3; 134)



love; and whatever thing you spend, Allah surely knows it.” (3; 92)

The term “*birr*” has been interpreted as in the meaning of perfection in righteousness, Allah’s mercy, His contentment and Paradise. In another verse Allah the Almighty states the term *birr* as follows:

“It is not righteousness that you turn your faces towards the East and the West, but righteousness is this that one should believe in Allah and the last day and the angels and the Book and the prophets, and give away wealth out of love for Him to the near of kin and the orphans and the needy and the wayfarer and the beggars and for (the emancipation of) the captives, and keep up prayer and pay the poor-rate; and the performers of their promise when they make a promise, and the patient in distress and affliction and in time of conflicts--these are they who are true(to themselves) and these are they who guard (against evil).” (2; 177)
This verse also contains several other nice qualities, which a Muslim should have, in addition to *birr*.

We need a serious campaign for *infāq* in our society, in which feelings of brotherhood and solidarity have been weakening; social peace and tranquility are disappearing; while feelings of hatred and hostility are getting stronger. This campaign is very important for both our children as well as ourselves. Our children should be raised knowing that the real owner of all wealth is Allah the Almighty. Just like we have a responsibility to teach our kids the basics of our religion, we also

Muslims should make generosity their natural habit.

have the responsibility to inoculate them with the excitement of *infāq* and to accustom them with the believer's obligation of helping the stricken. If we cannot manage to accustom them when they are young, that would be ruinous for their future.

Those who wish to be mature believers have to help, support and pray for the needy as much as they could. Sharing the problems of the stricken is also an act of *infāq*. It is possible to observe from the following prayer of Moses (pbuh) that rejoicing the broken hearts leads to closeness to Allah the Almighty. According to a narration one day Moses (pbuh) entreated for:

"O Lord! Where should I look for you?" Allah the Almighty responded:

"Look for me among the heartbroken" (Abu Nu'aym, *Hilya*, II, 364).

One of the most important services of the modern day is spend our resources to reinvigorate the institutions which instruct guiding figures. As it has been aptly stated by a thinker that "The greatest difference between dominating and dominated nations is a handful of well-trained human beings." What humanity needs are such a handful well-educated people.

If today's Muslim world is socially lost, it is because they faced an oppression which they could not get rid of. It should be remembered that in order to change the unfortunate fate of the Muslim world, Muslims should work more than the times they were strong. Muslims must adopt the Divine



"O you who believe! spend (benevolently) of the good things that you earn and or what

We have brought forth for you out of the earth, and do not aim at what is bad that you may spend (in alms) of it, while you would not take it yourselves unless you have its price lowered, and know that Allah is Self-sufficient, Praiseworthy."

(2: 267)



“By no means shall you attain to righteousness until you spend (benevolently) out of what you love; and whatever thing you spend, Allah surely knows it.”

(3; 92)

statement: “verily, with every difficulty, there is relief” as a principle of life and determine to find a way to save themselves. This is such a significant responsibility that some actions which are normally lawful transform into legally questionable ones. It is similar to the situation of a mother, who while she breastfeeding her baby, finds herself in the middle of a fire. If she keeps breastfeeding and puts her baby’s and her life in danger, she would be accountable for her actions. This is an important issue of Islamic sciences called “*maslahah*” or public interest. Therefore Muslims should meticulously examine contemporary Muslim society’s interest and then do whatever *maslahah* requires but not more than it requires. Maybe then Muslims can find a way out of their crisis.

As we mentioned before, religious foundations, which have been the distinctive marks of Muslim civilization, are the best practical examples showing how perfectly they determined and figured out the needs and exigencies of time.

The strongest capability which deviates heart away from Allah the Almighty and attaches it to itself can be observed in wealth and children. Because of that Allah states in the Holy Qur'an:

“Your possessions and your children are only a trial, and Allah it is with Whom is a great reward.”
(64; 15)

“O you who believe! let not your wealth, or your children, divert you from the remembrance of Allah; and whoever does that, these are the losers.”

(63; 9)

Infāq can be best performed through religious foundations. They are the safest way for the rich to reach the needy. In a way they are bridges between the poor and the rich. Those who give their charity to religious foundations enjoy the possibility to reach the needy even after their death.



b- Manners of *infāq*

Manners are extremely important in charitable actions like *zakāt* and *sadaqa*. Above all the donor should not be expecting appreciation from the receiver, because the receiver saves the donor from an obligatory debt and assures him to get a Divine reward. Charity also protects the donor from all kinds of maladies and calamities. The poor, the miserable and the needy are actually a blessing for the affluent, because the gates of heaven will be opened by their prayers.

The following is stated in the Qur'an regarding the manners of *infāq*:

“O you who believe! do not make your charity worthless by reproach and injury, like he who spends his property to be seen of men and does not believe in Allah and the last day; so his parable is as the parable of a smooth rock with earth upon it, then a heavy rain falls upon it, so it leaves it bare; they shall not be able to gain anything of what they have earned; and Allah does not guide the unbelieving people.” (2: 264)

Even though giving *zakāt* and *sadaqa* is encouraged in this verse, the conduct, which should

The acceptable generosity before Allah the Almighty is to give from the best part of the property. If only this nicety is taken into account in charitable actions, then these actions will be means to convey the donor to Divine contentment.



be observed in *infāq*, is also clearly mentioned. Charity followed by breaking hearts, belittling the poor, reminding generosity and insults has no value in the presence of Allah the Almighty.

The Prophet (pbuh) said:

“Three are the (persons) with whom Allah would neither speak on the Day of Resurrection, nor would look at them nor would absolve them and there is a painful chastisement for them.”

Upon hearing that the messenger of Allah repeated those words three times, Abu Dharr remarked:

“They failed and they lost; who are these persons, O Messenger of Allah?”

To this the Prophet (pbuh) responded:

“They are: the dragger of lower garment, the one who reminds his generosity and the seller of goods by false oath.” (Muslim, *Kitab al-Iman*, 171)

These statements prove that charities followed by insults and reminders are great sins which will cause the servant to be punished, because hearts are the places of Divine sight. Rumi says:

“Nicely give your property, your wealth, your possessions and make the soul happy so that the prayer of that soul be a light in your grave, and light your way in the dark night.”

Those who wish to be mature believers have to help, support and pray for the needy as much as they could. Sharing the problems of the stricken is also an act of infāq.

In his sapient couplets Rumi (may Allah bless his soul) points out that the poor and needy are in a way blessing for the affluent since by means of the poor, wealthy people can pay their gratitude to

Allah the Almighty. He also states in the following passage that bounty can only be reflected on the people in need and for that, affluent people should be careful not to hurt their feelings:

“The poor is the mirror of bounty, Beware! Do not breathe over the mirror by saying hurtful things to the face of the mirror.

One of the manifestations of Allah’s bounty is the poor. Allah Almighty causes the poor to beg, thus paths to happiness are prepared for the generous. Another manifestation of Allah Almighty’s bounty is to inspire the feelings of love and mercy into the heart of the wealthy to help the needy.

Inasmuch as the poor need the generosity and goodness, generosity and goodness need the poor. Just like the beautiful look for a clean, dust free and clear mirror to watch their beauty, generosity looks for the poor and the needy.

Beggars, then, are the mirrors of Allah’s bounty. There the affluent watch their bounty. The righteous rich who are united with the Absolute Bounty recognize that their wealth is just a trust upon them and they understand their weakness in the presence of Allah Almighty. And they become mirror of Divine bounty. By getting a share from Allah’s bounty, they annihilated in generosity.

Those who carry their little or abundant wealth in their hearts are the miserable of the Hereafter. This kind of people is not at Divine door. Their existence is relative, and it is just an external figure and embroidery of the door.



Charity followed by breaking hearts, belittling the poor, reminding generosity and insults has no value in the presence of Allah the Almighty.

Charity followed by breaking hearts, belittling the poor, reminding generosity and insults has no value in the presence of Allah the Almighty.



They are the real miserable and spiritually poor, who are drawn away from Allah Almighty. Their virtual existence is lifeless embroidery and faded picture of their misery. They are those who are soulless and unaware of the reality. Stay away from them! Do not throw a bone to a picture of a dog!

Be careful and do not set dishes before these lifeless pictures! Do not treat them with favors and do not behave friendly toward them! This kind of rich will be the beggars of Judgment day.

Such dervishes are the dervishes of bread not essence. They think that their misery is their happiness. In their opinion they eat good food and drink sweet juices, but in reality they have no share from Divine morsel.

O those who don't want to face the same disappointment! Surround the creation with your bounty so that you can be among the wise."

Another important conduct, which should be observed in giving *zakāt* or *sadaqa*, is to be careful about secrecy. Giving *sadaqa* openly may wear down the shame of the needy and he/she may get accustom to begging and stop working completely. It may also cause the rich to become arrogant.

However sometimes publicly announcing charity might contain some benefits. In this way populace get encouraged to help the poor. In the Holy Qur'an Allah the Almighty says:

"If you give alms openly, it is well, and if you hide it and give it to the poor, it is better for you; and this will do away with some of your evil deeds; and Allah is aware of what you do." (2: 271)

Rumi says:

"Nicely give your property, your wealth, your possessions and make the soul happy so that the prayer of that soul be a light in your grave, and light your way in the dark night."

Commentators have interpreted this verse as *zakāt* needs to be given openly and all the other types of charity have to be performed secretly.

The best conduct in charity is to give charity so secretly “that left hand does not know what the right hand has given.” People who observe this conduct have been given the good news that they will be shaded by Allah under His shade on the day when there will be no shade except His. Our ancestors displayed the best examples of this conduct.

For instance Mehmed II, the conqueror, placed several conditions in his endowment deed about the manners of helping the needy. Subjects of such a considerate Sultan used to place their charity in envelopes and leave it under the charity rocks in the mosques; people in need could go and take as much as they need without meeting the donor.

Even though secrecy has central importance in giving charity, sometimes openness is also encouraged in order to protect the heart from hypocrisy. In addition there is no time limit for charity. A believer may give charity day and night whenever it is needed. This is mentioned in the following verse:

“(As for) those who spend their property by night and by day, secretly and openly, they shall have their reward from their Lord and they shall have no fear, nor shall they grieve.” (2: 274)

Abu Bakr (may Allah be pleased with him) donated ten thousand dinars out of his forty thousand dinars during the day, ten thousand



*“The poor is
the mirror
of bounty,
Beware!
Do not
breathe over
the mirror
by saying
hurtful
things to the
face of the
mirror.”* Jalal
al-Din Rumi



during the night, ten thousand secretly and the remaining ten thousand openly. It is said that Abu Bakr's this generosity was the reason of revelation of the aforementioned verse.

On the other hand Ali (may Allah be pleased with him) gave one dirham out of his four dirhams during the day, another dirham during the night, one dirham secretly and one dirham openly, even though he did not have any more money. When the Prophet (pbuh) asked him "*why he had done that*", he said:

"In order to deserve what my Lord promised me." Then the Prophet (pbuh) told him:

"You have attained what you wished." (Wahidi, *Asbab al-Nuzul al-Qur'an*, 95)

Altruism is the sign of love. Lover makes sacrifices for his beloved in the extent of his love. He considers sacrifice as a pleasure. Sacrifice can even go as much as giving life for the beloved. Giving charity to the creation of Allah the Almighty is the greatest manifestation of love. Because, *zakāt* and *sadaqa* are given for the sake of Allah, it is expressed in the Qur'an that **"Allah receives the charity"** as part of the following verse:

"Do they not know that Allah accepts repentance from His servants and takes the alms, and that Allah is the Oft-returning (to mercy), the Merciful?" (9; 104)

To emphasize the same subtle point, the Prophet (pbuh) says:

"(As for) those who spend their property in the way of Allah, then do not follow up what they have spent with reproach or injury, they shall have their reward from their Lord, and they shall have no fear nor shall they grieve."
(Qur'an 2; 262)

*"Allah accepts all charity from that earned earnestly, the Lord would accept and receive it with His Right Hand."*¹⁵

The most important requirement in giving charity is, then, honesty, sincerity and to do it just for the sake of Allah. Feeling proud and expecting thanks and gratitude after charity is something completely unacceptable. This way of thinking cleans out all Divine rewards of charity. On the contrary, donor should feel gratitude for the needy and should not expect anything other than Allah the Almighty's contentment. In the presence of Allah the Almighty, this is the acceptable conduct in giving charity. In the following verse Allah the Almighty praises Ali and Fatimah's (may Allah be pleased with them) charity and advises to all believers to have the same sensitivity:

"And they give food out of love for Him to the poor and the orphan and the captive: And they give food out of love for Him to the poor and the orphan and the captive: Surely we fear from our Lord a stern, distressful day. Therefore Allah will guard them from the evil of that day and cause them to meet with ease and happiness;" (76; 8-11)

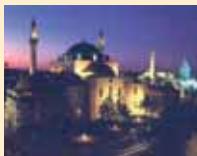
There are several subtle points about charity in this verse:

1. It is pointed out that altruism and preferring Muslim brother/sister upon self is a praised quality
2. Charity should be for the sake of Allah the Almighty not for a worldly gain

15. Muslim, *Kitab al-Zakat*, 63



"(As for) those who spend their property by night and by day, secretly and openly, they shall have their reward from their Lord and they shall have no fear, nor shall they grieve."
(Qur'an 2; 274)



” O you who believe! do not make your charity worthless by reproach and injury, like him who spends his property to be seen of men and does not believe in Allah and the last day; so his parable is as the parable of a smooth rock with earth upon it, then a heavy rain falls upon it, so it leaves it bare; they shall not be able to gain anything of what they have earned; and Allah does not guide the unbelieving people.”
(Qur'an 2; 264)

3. Emphasis on the importance of giving charity for the sake of Allah in order to be saved from the horrible torments of the Judgment Day

4. Charities given sincerely will be accepted by Allah and they will make the donor's face lighten up on the Judgment Day

5. It is also pointed out that Allah the Almighty wants his servants to perform such pious deeds.

If the donor follows the guidelines given in this verse, righteousness and sincerity in his soul will also be reflected in the receiver. And even if he is not eligible to charity, he will take his lesson out of this. If charity is given with sincere intentions, then the giver will get his rewards even if it is given to someone undeserving. This is stated in the following tradition:

“Allah’s Apostle (pbuh) said, “A man said that he would give something in charity. He went out with his object of charity and unknowingly gave it to a thief. Next morning the people said that he had given his object of charity to a thief. (On hearing that) he said, “O Allah! All the praises are for you. I will give alms again.” And so he again went out with his alms and (unknowingly) gave it to an adulterous. Next morning the people said that he had given his alms to an adulterous last night. The man said, “O Allah! All the praises are for you. (I gave my alms) to an adulterous. I will give alms again.” So he went out with his alms again and (unknowingly) gave it to a rich person. (The people) next morning said that he had given his alms to a wealthy person. He said, “O Allah! All the praises are for you. (I had given alms) to a thief, to an adulterous and to a wealthy man.” Then someone came and said to him, “The

alms which you gave to the thief, might make him abstain from stealing, and that given to the adulteress might make her abstain from illegal sexual intercourse (adultery), and that given to the wealthy man might make him take a lesson from it and spend his wealth which Allah has given him, in Allah's cause." (Bukhari, *Kitab al-Zakât*, 14)

A similar incident happened to Mahmud Sâmî Ramazanoğlu (may Allah bless his soul). Once when he was on a trip in Anatolia, someone stops his car and asks for cigarette money.

Even though his friends disagree with him, he says:

"Since he asked, we need to give him money" and under his friends' surprised looks, he unwaveringly gives the money. The poor pleased with what he had seen says:

"Now I will go and buy food with this money" and happily walks away. This is a nice example showing how a charity given sincerely can make positive effects on the needy. What a great happiness would be for us if we primarily consider the feelings of the needy not ours.

O Lord! Make the manifestations of mercy infinite treasures of our hearts.

Amin!



The most important requirement in giving charity is, then, honesty, sincerity and to do it just for the sake of Allah.



ZAKĀT FROM LEGAL PERSPECTIVE¹⁶

“Surely they who believe and do good deeds and keep up prayer and pay the poor-rate they shall have their reward from their Lord, and they shall have no fear, nor shall they grieve.”
(Qur'an 2: 277)

Prerequisites of obligation of zakāt

1. *Zakāt* is obligatory upon free and competent adults who are in possession of their faculty of reasoning.
2. He should own more than a specified amount, called *nisāb*, of growing wealth in excess of his essential needs and debts. Essential necessities are the things that a person needs to maintain his life and liberty. Among them are his house, all the items in his house except gold and silver ones, his clothes, living expenses of household members for a month – according to another view for a year – his books for personal study, and his handicraft tools for work.
3. Another condition for *zakātability* is that the *zakātable* assets must have the quality of *namā* or wealth must either be actually growing or have

16. In this chapter zakat's legal side is explained only briefly. For detailed information see Döndüren, Hamdi, *Delilleri ile İslâm İlmihali*; Bilmen, Ömer Nasuhi, *Büyük İslâm İlmihali*; Zühayli, Vehbe, *İslâm Fıkhi Ansiklopedisi*; Written by a committee (İSAV), *İbâdet ve Müessesesi Olarak Zekât*. If these books can not be accessed, questions can be asked to knowledgeable staff of presidency of religious affairs.

the potential for growth. According to terminology of tax law, this is stated as follows: "wealth must either grow itself or bring profit and benefit to its owner." "Actual growth" occurs as a result of birth, procreation, trade etc. "Potentially growing wealth" on the other hand means that the type of wealth in hand has potential to grow.

4. Twelve full lunar months should pass from the beginning of ownership of the assets. *Zakāt* has to be paid according to lunar year, in other words for every 354 days % 2.5 of the wealth is given as *zakāt*. However nowadays some companies calculate their *zakāt* according to solar year or 365 days, which means they need to calculate and add 11 more days of *zakāt* to their payments. It should also be mentioned that "this condition is restricted to livestock, money, and business assets. It does not apply to crops, fruits, honey, extracted minerals, found treasure, etc., where there is no condition of one year on the grounds that *zakāt* on those items is a sort of *zakāt* on income."¹⁷

5. Owner of the assets must have the undivided and absolute right of the ownership.

Those who will pay their *zakāt* must be very meticulous about *tamlīk* and *taharri*, because the validity of zakat depends on them. As it is mentioned before *tamlīk* means to give or to transfer ownership of the alms, in other words recipient must get the

17. Qaradawi, Yusuf, *Fiqh al-Zakah: A Comparative Study of Zakah, Regulations and Philosophy in the Light of Qur'an and Sunnah*, Trans. by Monzer Kahf, Scientific Publishing Center King Abdulaziz University, Jeddah, Online edition, vol. 1, p. 71
<http://islamiccenter.kaau.edu.sa/arabic/Index.htm>



*Zakat is
 the best
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We need a serious campaign for infāq in our society, in which feelings of brotherhood and solidarity have been weakening; social peace and tranquility are disappearing; while feelings of hatred and hostility are getting stronger.

complete ownership of it. *Taharri*, on the other hand, means the investigation before giving zakat. That is to investigate whether the receiver of zakat is eligible for it or not. If zakat is given to someone not qualified, and later it appears that the receiver is not one of the eight eligible categories mentioned in the Qur'an, zakat becomes invalid and it needs to be repaid. However if an investigation was performed before the distribution of zakat, but later it arises that the receiver was not eligible, then there is no need to repay zakat.

Another central principle about zakat is not to forget family member and relatives. Human beings first of all have rights upon themselves, next comes the rights of the family members and then rights of the relatives. Same order of the rights is also observed in inheritance law. Priority in the order of the rights depends on two things: First is the strength and closeness of the relation and the second is the degree of deprivation and necessity.

Preferring relatives over others does not mean giving zakat to a relative when there is someone who has more urgent needs. Preference is given to relatives only if the necessity levels are same. Degree of necessity should always be taken into consideration. If a stranger has more needs, then preference cannot be given to relatives.

All these measure and conducts are manifestations of how Islam, on the one hand, promotes mercy and, on the other hand, observes the balance. Because the first fruit of faith is mercy, those who do not have mercy in their hearts cannot be considered

as real believers. *Basmala*, which is stated as the beginning of all goodness, and *Fatiha*, first chapter of the Qur'an, start with the Allah the Almighty's attributes of *Rahman* (Most Gracious) and *Rahim* (Most Merciful). Lives of the prophets and the lives of friends of Allah the Almighty are full with manifestations of mercy. The Prophet's (pbuh) saying: "Show mercy to those on earth, so that those above the heaven will show mercy to you" points out that Muslim's mercy should encompass entire creation. Socio-financial worships, such as *zakat*, *infaq* and *ushr*, are all expressions of compassion.

Types and limits of wealth subject to *zakāt*

The minimum *zakātability* limit for sheep and goats is 40, for cows 30 and for camels 5. Minimum limit for gold is 81 grams,¹⁸ and for silver 561 grams. While there is a standard amount to be paid which is 1/40 for gold and silver exceeding the minimum *zakātability* limits, the amount needs to be paid for the rest of the *zakātable* assets differs. When the number of animals changes, the amount required to be paid changes. Detailed information can be found in books explaining the principles of Islam. Also the required limits for mines and seafood can be found in those books.

All movable and immovable assets yielding profits are subject to requirement of *zakāt*. *Zakāt* for the revenues of rented assets needs to be calculated

18. There are different calculations for gold. According to them minimum *zakātability* limit is calculated as 96, 90, 85 and 81 grams. Here we have accepted 81 grams for the benefit of the poor.



*Muslim's mercy should encompass entire creation. Socio-financial worships, such as *zakat*, *infaq* and *ushr*, are all expressions of compassion.*



"Men whom neither merchandise nor selling diverts from the remembrance of Allah and the keeping up of prayer and the giving of poor-rate; they fear a day in which the hearts and eyes shall turn about"
(Qur'an 24; 37)

after deducting, debts, personal and family expenses and costs such as wages, maintenance, taxes, among others. Lands bought for trading purposes are subject to *zakāt* based on their initial price (if there is any, the difference of inflation needs to be added to the calculation). Buildings built to sell are, on the other hand, subject to *zakāt* based on their values after deducting the costs.

Calculation of *zakāt* for business inventory is done as follows, if is paid by the company not by the shareholders. First revenues and expenditures need to be calculated either at the beginning of the year or at the end of it. After adding receivable debts and credits to net income, either % 2.5, if it is calculated based on the basis of lunar year, or %2.6 of the net income, if it is calculated on the basis of solar year, must be paid as *zakāt*. It should be mentioned that *zakāt* for business income is levied not just on profits but also on the principal of the company.

Industrial establishments such as factories, workshops, plants, etc. calculate their *zakāt* as follows:

1. There no *zakāt* for machinery and tools. However if they are made from gold or silver, then their values should be calculated for *zakāt*.
2. Business principal is subject to *zakāt*. After deducting expenses and costs, *zakāt* is calculated for the rest of the principal.
3. If the wages of the workers are paid monthly, fluctuations during the year are not taken

into consideration. Only the balance at the end of the year is important for *zakāt* calculations.

If *zakāt* is paid in cash, then it is very important to calculate the effects of inflation. In order to protect the rights of the poor and to be able to make a more accurate calculation, it is necessary to establish a fixed method of *zakāt* calculation. Otherwise the real value of the paid amount will be less than 2.5 percent. The needy will be suffered, and the obligation of *zakāt* will not be performed properly.

Islam essentially ordered *zakāt* to be paid in kind. In other words *zakāt* is recommended to be paid in gold for those who have gold, in silver for those who have silver, by sheep for those who have sheep, by wheat for those who have wheat and by cloth for those who own cloth. However *zakāt* was collected either in kind or in cash during the time of the Prophet (pbuh), then during the period of Abu Bakr and Omar (may Allah be pleased with them). That is why there is no problem today with paying *zakāt* in cash.

Recipients of *zakāt*

Allah the Almighty says:

“Alms are only for the poor and the needy, and the officials(appointed) over them, and those whose hearts are made to incline (to truth) and the (ransoming of) captives and those in debts and in the way of Allah and the wayfarer; an ordinance from Allah; and Allah is knowing, Wise.” (9: 60)



”And We made them Imams who guided (people) by Our command, and We revealed to them the doing of good and the keeping up of prayer and the giving of the alms, and Us (alone) did they serve”
(Qur'an 21: 73)



"Behold! you are those who are called upon to spend in Allah's way, but among you are those who are niggardly, and whoever is niggardly is niggardly against his own soul; and Allah is Self-sufficient and you have need (of Him), and if you turn back He will bring in your place another people, then they will not be like you." (Qur'an 47: 38)

This verse clearly reveals the eligible recipients of *zakāt*, which are:

- 1. The poor:** Those who have wealth less than the minimum *zakātable* amount or *nisāb*. People in this group can get *zakāt*, even if they have a regular job.
- 2. The needy:** Those who are extremely poor and do not even own their daily sustenance.
- 3. Workers in *zakāt* administration**
- 4. Those whose hearts are being reconciled**
- 5. Slaves:** Slaves who have signed a contract with their owner for their emancipation
- 6. Those under liabilities:** *zakāt* can be paid to those who have more debt than their wealth.
- 7. In the way of Allah:** those who fight in the way of Allah, those who set out for pilgrimage and are stranded on their way without money, those who study and teach in order to be beneficial to humanity and Muslim nation.
- 8. Wayfarers:** *zakāt* can be paid to travelers who are stranded on their way without money, even if they are wealthy in their hometown.

Categories to which *zakāt* cannot be given

Zakāt cannot be given to mothers, fathers, grandmothers, grandfathers, sons, daughters, the rich and non-Muslims. Also spouses cannot give their *zakāt* to each other.

Zakāt can only be given to individuals for their essential necessities. It cannot be given to corporate entities. That is why mosques, schools and hospitals cannot be built by *zakāt* revenues. Feasts for the needy cannot be considered *zakāt*, because there is no transfer of ownership.



Ushr (Tithe): Zakāt on Agricultural Produces

1. According to Abu Hanifa (may Allah have mercy on his soul) there is no *nisāb* limit for agricultural produces. In other words, neither a *zakātability* limit nor a passage of a year requirement is sought for agricultural produces. According to Abu Yusuf and Muhammad Shaybani the minimum limit for agricultural produces is 653 kilograms.
2. If a produce is harvested more than once a year, '*ushr*' needs to be paid for each harvest based on the type of the produce.
3. Unlike *zakāt*, '*ushr* (tithe) has to be paid from produce of the lands of children and insane. It should also be paid from the heritage of a deceased.
4. Agricultural produce has to be preservable for a year. That is why there is no '*ushr*' for fresh fruit and vegetables, for they are perishable products.
5. For agricultural produce watered without a cost, for instance by rain, river or lake water, one tenth of the produce is paid as '*ushr*'. If watering the crops requires some additional costs for more than half of the year, then the amount needs to be paid drops to one twentieth. However once the rate de-

Zakāt can only be given to individuals for their essential necessities.

It cannot be given to corporate entities.

That is why mosques, schools and hospitals cannot be built by zakāt revenues.



The best conduct in charity is to give charity so secretly "that left hand does not know what the right hand has given." People who observe this conduct have been given the good news that they will be shaded by Allah under His shade on the day when there will be no shade except His.

creases to one twentieth other costs, such as seeds, labor, pest control, etc. cannot be deducted.

6. Once '*ushr*' is paid for the produce, such as olive, sesame, and sunflowers seeds, there is no requirement to pay it again for their oils. However the person who buys the oil for trading purposes must pay *zakāt* for trade income.

7. Payment of '*ushr*' based on a pre-harvest estimation is not allowed.

8. If the owner needs to consume his agricultural produce before the payment of '*ushr*', he should compensate '*ushr*' for the consumed part. For instance if someone uses 10 kilogram of the produce, he needs to pay an additional kilogram '*ushr*'.

9. Lands which are conquered by Muslim armies but not distributed among the Muslims are called *miri* lands. Ownership of those lands belongs to the Muslim state, but their utilization rights are given to peasants. Peasants are like tenants and the taxes and levies they pay are similar to rents. From this type of lands there is no '*ushr*' or any other type of *zakāt*. During the Ottoman Empire, lands were usually under this category.

Later vast areas of *miri* lands in Anatolia and Rumelia were sold to individuals in exchange of land titles. In this way a new type of land emerged called *mulki* lands. This type of land should be subjected to '*ushr*', because they can be bought and sold. If '*ushr*' is not collected by the state, then Muslims must calculate and distribute it personally.

An Interview About Endowment, *Zakāt*, And *İnfāq*¹⁹

WEALTH IS A TRUST

What does ownership mean according to Islam?

According to Islamic perspective, real ownership belongs to neither individuals nor society, but it ultimately belongs to Allah the Almighty. Its right to use is entrusted to the servants for a limited period of time and under some specific conditions. Therefore, servants cannot use their wealth as they wish. It has to be utilized according to the regulations of its real owner, Allah the Almighty. That means the rich have to share their wealth with the needy and the stricken based on the regulations of Islam. The object here is to be such a believer that everybody is safe and benefited from whose hands, tongue, and wealth.

This quality is a result of realization that wealth is Allah the Almighty's trust for His servants. Utilizing wealth contrary to this reality would mean breaching the trust and this would lead several social problems as in contemporary society.

What is the place of getting rich from an Islamic perspective?

Islam encourages its followers to get rich from lawful ways. Two of the five basic principles of Islam are required only from the rich Muslims. These are pilgrimage and *zakāt*.

19. This section is taken from an interview with the author performed by Altinoluk magazine.



”O you who believe! be careful of (your duty to) Allah, and let every soul consider what it has sent on for the morrow, and be careful of (your duty to) Allah; surely Allah is Aware of what you do.”
(Qur'an 59: 18)



The Prophet (pbuh) says: "The upper hand is better than the lower hand (i.e. he who gives in charity is better than him who takes it)." (Bukhari, Zakāt, 18).

In a way Allah the Almighty tells His servants "get rich from lawful paths then pay your *zakāt* and visit My house."

On the other hand the Prophet (pbuh) says: "*The upper hand is better than the lower hand (i.e. he who gives in charity is better than him who takes it).*" (Bukhari, *Zakāt*, 18). So he encourages to be the givers, and advises us to prefer to be the givers not the takers.

What points should be taken into consideration in the path of gaining the wealth encouraged by Islam?

Trade is encouraged in Islam. However this encouragement neither means setting it free without any measures, like in liberal economies, nor abnormally limiting it like in socialist world views. By taking the benefit of the individuals and society into consideration, trade is limited as follows by some principles in respect to its area of activity and the way it's performed.

Trading unlawful materials, which are prohibited by Allah the Almighty, is absolutely not permitted. That means the first condition for a trade to be lawful is its area of activity must be permissible.

Other conditions are about the way it is performed.

Storing goods and reducing its amount in the market to increase its price is prohibited, which is called profiteering. In Islamic terminology it is called *ihtikar* and it is strongly prohibited.

Another prohibition in Islamic commercial law is fraud and overcharging in transactions. It means

to take advantage of the second person's ignorance, unawareness, inexperience or mental disabilities and overcharge him, for instance buying stolen goods for a very low price, or paying for valuable items less than their value.

On the one hand seller is required to tell the defects of the merchandise to the buyer. On the other hand, it is prohibited for the buyer to speak ill about the merchandise just to reduce its price.

Since our aim is not to talk about all the requirements of Islamic commercial law, it would be enough to tell one last requirement about the subject.

Under special circumstances profit rate can be fixed. This issue displays more significance during the catastrophic times of war, epidemics, among others. Islam allows the state administrators to take the necessary measures and issue legal regulations based on public interest. There are numerous manifestations of this principle in commercial law. It is necessary for Muslims to obey the regulations of their rulers, especially those about the profit ranges, for the sake of public interest. However, there are some fields of commercial law, to which profit fixation cannot be applied because of high risks.

There are several prophetic traditions about the encouragement of commerce. Some of them are as follow:

"Reliable, trustworthy and believing merchant will be together with martyrs on the Judgment Day." (Ibn Majah, *Tijarah*, 1)

"Brave merchant who puts his goods up for sale is blessed; and profiteer is cursed." (Ibn Majah, *Tijarah*, 6)



"They it is who say: Do not spend upon those who are with the Messenger of Allah until they break up. And Allah's are the treasures of the heavens and the earth, but the hypocrites do not understand."
(Qur'an 63: 7)



“Coward merchant remains deprived; brave merchant is blessed.” (Daylami, *Musnad*, II, 79)

“The best and most lawful of the food someone consumes is the one he earns himself.” (Ibn Majah, *Tijarah*, 1)

If a Muslim gets rich by following the principles of Islam, can he freely spend his wealth?

There are several kinds of beings which are accepted as assets, e.g. animals, properties, jewelry, commercial goods among others. Islam stipulates some rules for the usage of these assets. For instance feeding the mounts little and overloading them is prohibited in Islam. Employing an asset just to harm someone is also prohibited. You cannot build a wall around your garden so high that prevents your neighbor's son. You are not allowed to damage commercial goods, especially food, needed by populace as a result of improper usage. For instance just to protest something, you cannot dump vegetables of your garden, because they have to be in public use.

You cannot drop the production of your plant just to increase your profit. Modern day artificial price gouging by commercial organizations called cartels and monopolies is also among the prohibitions of Islam.

What are the financial responsibilities of a wealthy Muslim?

Zakāt is the most important responsibility in the wealth of affluent Muslims. The word *zakāt* comes from the Arabic root *tazkiyah*, which means purification. In other words *zakāt* purifies the wealth. Since it is ordered by Allah, *zakāt* is poor's due in the

“Reliable, trustworthy and believing merchant will be together with martyrs on the Judgment Day.”

(Ibn Majah, Tijarah, 1)

wealth of the affluent. Holding *zakāt* and not paying it is not much different than usurping somebody else's property. Allah the Almighty assigned minimum *zakātable* limits (*nisāb* or standard for richness) for some types of assets. Wealth over this *zakātable* limits is subject to payment of *zakāt*.

Richness according to Islamic standards is different than the standards of today's super rich people. 81 grams of gold or equivalent of property is the legal limit for richness according to Islam. If a Muslim owns assets equal to the *nisāb* limit or more, he needs pay his *zakāt* upon passage of a lunar year.

In Islam two and a half percent of wealth belongs to the needy. Their right should be presented to them as nice as possible. In other words *zakāt* means making the people in need two and a half percent partners of the wealth. *Zakāt* is the minimum limit to be paid to the poor. However *zakāt* goes up to ten percent for agricultural produce, and for animals, the amount differs depending upon the kind of animal.

Wealth should also be adorned and beautified by additional activities of charity *sadaqa*, *infaq*, etc. Abu Bakr (may Allah be pleased with him) had declared war upon those who refused to pay *zakāt*, which proves the significance of the issue.

If stronger partner does not give the rights of the weaker partner, he becomes tyrant and usurper. His wealth remains in need to be purified.

Those who are eligible for *zakāt* are clearly stated in the Qur'an. *Zakāt* should be given to the



"The best and most lawful of the food someone consumes is the one he earns himself."

(Ibn Majah, Tijarah, 1)



poor, debtors, students, those who work for the sake of Allah and wayfarers in the extent of their needs. Today wealthy Muslims should pay more than they are required to pay, because of the hard financial problems of contemporary world.

We should also talk about the important issue of '*ushr*', which has been neglected in the Muslim world for quite some time. The land regime in the Ottoman Empire was a regime called *miri*. However today the system has been changed and become *mulki* land regime. Unlike *miri* lands, *mulk* lands can be an object of transactions. Owner of a *mulk* land can use the land however they want. In this way he has to pay five percent out of the harvest if there is watering costs; if not, rate goes up to ten percent, which is called in religious terminology as '*ushr*'. Just like those who don't pay *zakāt*, those who do not pay their '*ushr*' are usurpers. They steal from the rights of the needy and from the rights of those who strive for the sake of Allah. This issue needs to be taken diligently and Muslim should learn related issues either from the books or ask them to religious scholars.

*You have mentioned that there are other ways of helping the poor in addition to *zakāt*. Could you elaborate this?*

Wealth should also be adorned and beautified by additional activities of charity *sadaqa*, *infaq*, etc.

Of course these are not obligatory payments like *zakāt*, but encouraged and voluntary activities. These are called *infaq*, *ithar* (giving generously) and endowment of a property for the sake of Allah the Almighty. *Zakāt* is the obligatory type of helping

the needy. Wealth should also be adorned with voluntary *sadaqa*, *infaq* and *ithar*.

Allah the Almighty says in the Qur'an:

"...and (as for) those who hoard up gold and silver and do not spend it in Allah's way, announce to them a painful chastisement" (9; 34)

As it can be seen in this verse, the place for those who usurp the rights of the poor will be Hell. We should think about this Divine threat and try to exceed the two and a half percent obligatory limit. For it is stated in another verse:

"...And they ask you as to what they should spend. Say: What you can spare..." (2; 219)

Our country is having financially difficult times. Nowadays our zakāt and charities perhaps have more significance?

As you mentioned, nowadays our country is in worldly-spiritual, social-financial crisis. That is why a serious charity campaign is needed. We should feel the sorrow of our sick, stricken, weak and lone Muslim brothers, because mercy means glad tidings for our eternal destination and peace of mind in this world. In addition to paying their *zakāt*, our wealthy brothers should even intensify their pious deeds. For *zakāt* takes care of the normal level necessities of the poor. However needs of the poor may sometimes exceed normal limits. In such times wealthy members of Muslim society become more significant in order to maintain peace and tranquility. We should not confine ourselves with *zakāt* when there is more need for our help. We should always remember that we



Needs of the poor may sometimes exceed normal limits. In such times wealthy members of Muslim society become more significant in order to maintain peace and tranquility.



Abu Huraira reported Allah's Messenger (pbuh) as saying: The Last Hour will not come before wealth becomes abundant and overflowing, so much so that a man takes Zakat out of his property and cannot find anyone to accept it from him and till the land of Arabia becomes meadows and rivers.
(Muslim, Kitab al-Zakat, 74)

could be in their place. It is also our way of thanks to our Lord.

Just like we have responsibility to teach our kids the basics of our religion, we also have the responsibility to inoculate them with the excitement of *infāq* and to accustom them with believer's obligation of helping the stricken. If we cannot manage to accustom them when they are young, that would be ruinous for their future. Our kids should be raised knowing that the real owner of the wealth is Allah the Almighty, in a way they think themselves like a teller of a bank or a trustee. Generations, who are raised in this way, may revive charity campaigns of our history, and our history is full of examples of *infaq* activities.

Let me give you an example: in 1913 when the Ottoman armies were losing the war in the Balkans, Jawhari Brothers and heads of Muslim associations in India were performing demonstrations, inviting all Muslims to help the Ottomans and encouraging them to give their zakat and charities to the Ottomans. There happened some very remarkable scenes. For instance a young man gave his shirt and an old man donated his shroud.

These and many other incidents established a great charity civilization. Manifestations of altruism and preference of the other, while they are in need, are the expressions of soul. That is why in my opinion giving *zakāt* to those striving for the sake of Allah is more important than giving *zakāt* to other eligible groups.

We observe that religious foundations have played a very significant role in charitable activities. Could you share your views about endowments with us?

Institutionalization of infaq leads to the foundation of waqfs or endowments. Endowment means to eternalize what is already belonged to Allah the Almighty. It is appropriation and dedication of property to charitable purposes until eternity. The goal in establishing waqfs is to approach creation with mercy and compassion for the sake of their Creator. It is an effort to dedicate life, property and everything to buy the Paradise in return.

As we have already mentioned, there were more than 26 thousand religious foundations in the Ottoman Empire. These foundations kept their charitable activities through the efforts of altruistic people. Social balance in this giant state is provided with the help of these foundations. They were also centers for the distribution of charities. How desperately we need these types of institutions today! Today we should revive these institutions and put them in the service of those in need.

I wonder how much the rich Muslims feel the pain of their needy brothers. Do they know how their poor brothers and sisters live? Do they even know they exist?

Our lives and our possessions are entrusted to us. In fact everything in this world is a trust to us. Protecting these trusts will be cause to blessings. *Infaq* can be performed not just by our wealth. It can be done with everything bestowed upon us.



Mercy gives tranquility to the souls in this world and becomes means of eternal salvation in the Hereafter.



” Say: Surely my Lord amplifies the means of subsistence for whom He pleases of His servants and straitens (them) for whom (He pleases), and whatever thing you spend, He exceeds it in reward, and He is the best of Sustainers.”
(Qur'an 34: 39)

The best way to perform *infaq* is to live according to regulations of Islam and be an exemplary Muslim. The Companions devoted themselves to carry Islam to the remotest corners of the world. Today to live Islam as they lived and with the same rupture and excitement is the best way of *infaq*. The real reason for the main financial problems of our country today, such as inflation and economic crisis, is not material but spiritual. Allah the Almighty has withdrawn his blessings from His servants for His servants' betrayal to His trust. Troubles come one after another. Our history is the best witness how *zakat* and *infaq* create peace and tranquility in the society.

In our history it has been observed that our ancestors thought their neighbors and the needy as much as themselves or even more. Today, on the other hand, many people have turned into selfish beings because of the effects of capitalism. What do you think the reasons and effects of this change are?

If all Muslims pay their *zakat* properly, after a while there won't be any Muslims left to take *zakat*. On the other hand if all the owners of agricultural lands pay their *'ushr* for the agricultural produce and *zakat* for their animals, I believe there won't be any poor left in our society. There are many examples of this in our history. During the Omar b. Abd al-Aziz caliphate there weren't any poor left, because the rich were properly paying their *zakat*.

Our ancestors competed with each other about charity. They reached the highest level of *infaq* or *ithar*. *Ithar* means “to give abundantly what is

yours" or "To help your brother even though you are in need" which unfortunately is very rare in our society today. To reach the level of *ithar* is not expected from everybody. However level of *ithar* is surprisingly high in societies which were nurtured by Prophets and friends of Allah.

Today we need to concentrate on *infaq* and encourage people to give. It is among the significant duties of our society to build religious institutions to train new generations, and hospitals to take care of the needy and nursing homes for the old.

How should zakat be paid? To what should we pay attention?

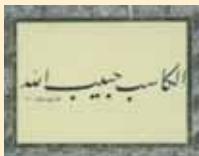
A mature Muslim should pay his *zakat* without hurting the feelings of the poor. Our ancestors paid utmost attention to this matter. Once there were "sadaqa rocks" in the mosques. Wealthy Muslims put their charity under these stones and those who need would go and take as much as they need. People in need would not exploit this method and take only the amount they need. There are still sadaqa rocks in some of our mosques. Unfortunately new generations see those stones but don't know what they are. Allah the Almighty says in a verse:

"Successful indeed are the believers, Who are humble in their prayers," (23; 1-2) Not just in our prayers but in our *zakat* too we should humble ourselves. Manners of *sadaqa* are explained in the following verse:

"Most surely in the creation of the heavens and the earth and the alternation of the night and



"The charity which you practice while you are healthy, niggardly and afraid of poverty and wish to become wealthy. Do not delay it to the time of approaching death and then say, 'Give so much to such and such, and so much to such and such.' And it has already belonged to such and such (as it is too late)."
(Bukhari, Kitab al-Zakat, 11)



the day, and the ships that run in the sea with that which profits men, and the water that Allah sends down from the cloud, then gives life with it to the earth after its death and spreads in it all (kinds of) animals, and the changing of the winds and the clouds made subservient between the heaven and the earth, there are signs for a people who understand.” (2: 264)

In fact we should give our charity with compassion and mercy as if we were giving it to ourselves. We should think that we could be the one in need. We should know that our feelings affect the feelings of the recipient of *zakat*. Sincerity of the recipient will be as much as sincerity in our hearts. On the other hand if we want to give our *zakat* hastily and leave then our spiritual blessings will be in the extent of our feelings.

Our conduct in presenting our *zakat* is also a central principle. If we present our *zakat*, as if we were presenting it to Allah the Almighty as a sign of our gratitude for His blessings, we would get the utmost spiritual benefit from it. We should respect and be grateful to the poor for making us possible to perform one of the basics of Islam. That is why we should personally go to the poor and present our *zakat*.

The best type of charity is to convey the message of Islam to other people.

The hadith which tells us that charity from that earned earnestly first accepted by Allah the Almighty and then it goes to the hands of the poor²⁰ is very significant. That means we should give our *zakat*, as if we were giving it to Allah the Almighty. As if we were presenting a gift, we should pay attention to

20. Muslim, *Kitab al-Zakat*, 63

every detail. Just as we give serious attention to the furniture we buy, we should be attentive delivering *zakat* to its recipient. We shouldn't withhold a simple smile or a few nice words. When Ramazanoğlu Mahmud Sâmi (may Allah bless his soul) saw a poor, if he was in a car, he would stop the car, get off the car, smile and give his charity. Altruism, courtesy and mercy should be distinctive characteristics of a Muslim.

Again it is stated in the Qur'an about the manners of *sadaqa* and *infaq*:

"O you who believe! spend (benevolently) of the good things that you earn and or what We have brought forth for you out of the earth, and do not aim at what is bad that you may spend (in alms) of it, while you would not take it yourselves unless you have its price lowered, and know that Allah is Self-sufficient, Praiseworthy." (2: 267)

Servant's responsibility is to perform this social worship with love, excitement and rupture.

Rumi (may Allah bless his soul) says: "*The place of sight of Allah is heart.*" Faith is a deed of heart and mercy is a fruit of soul. We should show mercy to those on earth, so that those above the heaven will show mercy upon us. In this way Our Lord, The Omnipotent and The Powerful, will have mercy upon us and forgive us.

Spiritual side of *zakat* and *infaq* is also fascinating. Our Hudayi foundation²¹, too, receives donations.

21. This is a charitable organization established by Aziz Mahmut Hudayi about four hundred years ago and revived by a group of pious Turkish Muslims in 1985. Among other services, this



"Give in charity because there will come a time on the people when a person will go out with his alms from place to place but will not find anybody to accept it."
(Bukhari, Fitan, 24)



We feel more peaceful with some donations. This is because of level of the lawfulness of the donation. If your profit is lawful, you feel the ease of mind and the poor prays thousands of times for the donor, and this is the spiritual side of this deed.

Another important issue is that both those who tell their needs and those who cannot have rights in the wealth of affluent. This issue is mentioned in the Qur'an as follows:

"And in their property was a portion due to him who begs and to him who is denied (good)." (51; 19) In this verse especially those who prevented from asking by their dignity are those who are very well educated and have good manners. We should not be deceived by their looks and think that they are not in need.

In other words we should perform a careful search about the recipient?

Of course *taharri* or careful search is a condition for *zakat*. If *zakat* is distributed without a careful search, and later it appears that it is given to ineligible people, then *zakat* must be repaid. If he is eligible, repayment is not required. There are two conditions of *zakat*, first one is *taharri* and the other is *tamlid* or transferring the ownership to the poor.

If zakat is given to an endowment for distribution, does this drop search requirement from zakat? In other words does the search requirement belong to the endowment?

Faith is a deed of heart and mercy is a fruit of soul. We should show mercy to those on earth, so that those above the heaven will show mercy upon us.

religious foundation collects *zakat* and charity and distribute it on national and international level.

Yes, if zakat is distributed by intermediary institutions, the responsibility is upon these institutions. Endowments should have employees responsible from searching the recipients of *zakat*. They should go to the recipients' district and ask about them to those who know them. If it is possible, they should go and visit them at their homes, because some people might want to exploit the religious foundations. After performing a careful research, I believe there will be no responsibility, but Allah knows best.

Zakat can only be given to real persons. It cannot be given to corporate entities. Not *zakat* revenues but other charitable sources can be used to build mosques, hospitals, schools, etc. Because of this, voluntary charities occupy a very significant place in Islam. For instance more than 26 thousand established the Ottoman waqfs were depending completely upon voluntary charities. Several types of services were performed through these foundations. There were endowments responsible from city water, hospitals, marrying off the orphan girls. There were even endowments taking care of needs of the porters, birds, etc. Today we cannot even think about those kinds of services, they were the fruits of great minds and souls. In the Ottoman Empire when a mosque was built, also a hospital, a fountain and a school were built next to it. All kinds of services for the society were grouped around the mosque. In this way society felt the real owner of the wealth and this created balance. Poor and rich peacefully lived in the same districts and houses of the rich became a harbor for the poor. The poor were able to tell their needs to the wealthy. Geometrically



Our conduct in presenting our zakat is also a central principle. If we present our zakat, as if we were presenting it to Allah the Almighty as a sign of our gratitude for His blessings, we would get the utmost spiritual benefit from it.



We should respect and be grateful to the poor for making us possible to perform one of the basics of Islam. That is why we should personally go to the poor and present our zakat.

there were not much difference between the houses of the wealthy and houses of the poor. Poor and rich loved each other. Wealthy members of the society respected and were grateful to the poor for making them possible to perform one of the basics of Islam. And the poor were thankful to the wealthy for being mediators to the blessings of Allah the Almighty.

There are of course numerous exemplary incidents in our history. Even though there are not many, could you give us some examples, which have left impression on you, from our recent history?

First of all I remember my father and uncle. When they would like to give something to the poor, they would get it nicely packed, and gently presented it to the poor without hurting their feelings. Recipient would be happy and the giver would feel peace. One of them was accepting their gifts knowing that it was really coming from Allah and the other was performing an order of Allah the Almighty.

There are also several examples from the Hudayi foundation. I would like to present some of them. We were helping a mother and her child. The kid was paralyzed and got a BA degree. On one occasion the woman came and thanked the Hudayi foundation. She said that she would not need our help anymore and told us to help someone poorer. She said because her son had recently passed away and used our last charity for funeral expenses of her son. Then she said because she was alone, she could somehow take care of herself.

Again we were helping a lady from the Netherlands whose husband had passed away and who was

raising her children alone. One day she sent a letter thanking us and saying: "I paid my husband's debts and saved him from other people's rights. Now I am able to live on my own." There are numerous similar altruistic incidents, which the poor recipient of *zakat* transferred his/her right to more needy.

Thank you very much for such a nice interview.

Thank you very much.



The Prophet said, "The poor person is not the one who asks a morsel or two (of meals) from the others, but the poor is the one who has nothing and is ashamed to beg from others."

(Bukhari, Zakat, 53)



*From The Apex
Of Islamic Civilization*



Service and Its Manners

Chapter Three

THE SUBLIME STEP TO THE SPIRITUAL APEX

SERVICE FOR THE SAKE OF ALLAH

We find the basis of Islamic ethics in getting closer to Allah the Almighty with love and sincerity. And we also observe the most apparent and significant sign of this approach in “serving the humans for the sake of Allah.” Because, based on the principle “those who serve humans are served by others,” serving human beings is an exceptional and sublime step to take the souls to Divine apexes.

This is such a step that all prophets and friends of Allah were exalted on it. In other words they became concrete manifestations of the following tradition of the Messenger of Allah (pbuh):

“The masters of a nation are the ones who serve their nation...” (Daylami, *Musnad*, II, 324)

Therefore for servants the path to Divine peaks goes through serving human beings with sincere hearts. Sometimes a little service deserving the contentment of



Those who serve humans are served by others



"We have ascended in this path not just by reading books but by applying what we read to our lives and serving public. Everybody is taken through a path and we were taken through the path of service."

Ubaydullah Ahrar (q.s.)

Allah can be more rewarding than many voluntary worships.

Once, the Prophet (pbuh) and his Companions camped during a journey. It was a very hot day. Some of the Companions were fasting, some were not. The fasting Companions fell asleep from exhaustion. Those who were not fasting carried water for their fasting friends and put up the tents. When the time came to break the fast, the Prophet (pbuh) said:

"Today those who did not fast have gone with more reward." (Muslim, *Kitab al-Sawm*, 100-101)

The Prophet (pbuh), who taught his followers so many guiding principles like the one above, carried bricks on his back for building the Quba Mosque and the Prophet's mosque in Medina even though his Companions tried to prevent him from working. His modesty and love to serve human beings is a matchless example for his Muslim nation. In fact he spent his entire life serving human beings and creation.

That is why serving humanity is one of the apparent characteristics of those who follow his footsteps. In other words the soul who loves Allah the Almighty and His Messenger should be among the people of service. On the one hand, service for the sake of Allah becomes a means to help others; on the other hand it provides a spiritual ascension for those who serve in the extent of their efforts and sincerity. Thus maybe the one who serves gets more benefit from the recipient of the service.

Man of service is like a river, which gives life to thousands of beings around it. This river's final destination is the sea of union with Allah the Almighty. Those who are aware of this fact deem themselves as servants of the public even if they are Sultans. When Ottoman Sultan Yavuz Salim heard an imam praising the Sultan in the sermon: "Hakim al-Haramain al-Sharifayn or Sovereign of the two *harams* (Mecca and Medina)" he objected with crying eyes: "On the contrary I am servant of two *harams* (Khadim al-Haramain al-Sharifayn)."

Ubaydullah Ahrar (q.s.) says about the state he reached by serving human beings:

"We have ascended in this path not just by reading books but by applying what we read to our lives and serving public. Everybody is taken through a path and we were taken through the path of service." These words reveal that knowledge itself is not enough unless it is transformed into action and service.

However for the acceptance of a service in the presence of Allah the Almighty, it should fulfill some conditions. An accepted service should be performed with a sincere, gracious and altruistic heart and should seek the contentment of Allah. In other words service must be done without aiming any a personal gain but to attain eternal reward. Service adorned with this quality will be a cause for eternal salvation, even if it is giving half a date as it was mentioned in the hadith.

Ubaydullah Ahrar (q.s.) narrates:



Those who serve others, fulfill their obligations and maintain their modesty while ascending in the ranks of spirituality would reach the ideal state of maturity.



Man of service is like a river, which gives life to thousands of beings around it. This river's final destination is the sea of union with Allah the Almighty.

“One day I went to market. Someone came to me and said: “I am hungry. Would you give me some food for the sake of Allah?” I did not have anything to give save an old turban. We went to a soup kitchen and told the cook: “Take this turban. It is old but clean. You can dry your dishes with it. And in return could you feed this poor man?” The cook gave some food to the poor man, and he did not want to accept my turban. But I refused. I waited until the poor man finished his meal, even though I was hungry myself.”

Later Ubaydullah Ahrar got so rich that he employed thousands of workers at his ranches. However, he never stopped serving human beings. His service to everybody, from the beginning to the end of the spiritual path, was magnificent. He narrates one of his services as follows:

“I had taken the care of four patients at Madrasah Maulana Qutbuddin in Samarkand. Because their diarrhea got worse, they started to wet their beds. I helped them to take their baths and washed their clothes. Because of my continuous care, I got infected and fell ill. Even then I continued my services and kept cleaning their clothes and beds.”

Ideal behaviors of our predecessors, their charities and services for the sake of Allah are excellent examples for us. No matter how rich a Muslim is, he would fulfill his wealth's requirements in the extent of maturity of his heart and spiritual state. Those who fulfill their obligations and maintain their modesty while ascending in the ranks

of spirituality would reach the ideal state mentioned in Ubaydullah Ahrar's anecdote.

Another very difficult rank to reach in serving human beings can be observed in Ma'ruf al-Karkhi's following narration: A sick and old person visited Mar'uf al-Karkhi. He was destitute; he was balding, and looked very pale. As if it was his final moments. Ma'ruf al-Karkhi prepared a bed for him and treated him well. the sick man was moaning and crying with pain. He neither slept himself nor let anybody else from the household members sleep all night. Besides he started to annoy everybody by his complaints. Finally everybody in the house except Ma'ruf al-Karkhi and his wife run away from the house.

Ma'ruf al-Karkhi was struggling to do everything he could in order to serve the sick man. However, one night he could not stand sleeplessness and fell asleep. When the heedless sick man saw him sleeping, instead of thanking him he continued his complaints and said:

"What kind of dervish is this? As a matter of fact people like him have a well-known in appearance, but in reality they are hypocrites. Their outside is clean but their inside is full of filth. They advice others to be pious but they themselves do not follow their own advice. Look how this man is sleeping without thinking my poor condition. What would someone who fed himself full and fell asleep know about the state of a helpless sick man?"

Ma'ruf al-Karkhi, on the other hand, bore with his complaints and pretended not to hear them.



*"The merit
in serving
humans is
to endure
the burden
of the poor
when you
feel yourself
strong and
healthy."*

Sheikh Sadi



The heart filled with love is a forgiven heart. If you are made up just from an appearance, when you die, your name will die with your body. If you live as a generous man and be a man of service, your life will continue after your death in the extent of your devotion and penetration into the hearts. Do not you see there are so many tombs in the city of Karkh, but none of them is known and visited as much as Ma'ruf al-Karkhi's tomb."

Sheikh Sadi

However his wife could not stand anymore and quietly told her husband:

“You heard what this grumpy old man said. We can no longer have him in this house. Let’s not allow him to hurt you anymore. Tell him to find himself another place to stay. Goodness should be done to those who appreciate it. To do favors to the ungrateful is in fact doing them evil. A pillow should not be placed under a lousy man’s head. His head deserves to be on a stone.”

After listening quietly his wife’s words, Ma'ruf al-Karkhi said smilingly:

“My dear, why do his words hurt you? If he had said something, they were for me; if he had done something rude, he did it to me; do not you see he is in great pain. He cannot even sleep. You should also know that the real kindness and mercy is to able to tolerate people like them...”

Sheikh Sadi who narrated the aforementioned story gives the following advice:

“The merit in serving humans is to endure the burden of the poor when you feel yourself strong and healthy.”

“The heart filled with love is a forgiven heart. If you are made up just from an appearance, when you die, your name will die with your body. If you live as a generous man and be a man of service, your life will continue after your death in the extent of your devotion and penetration into the hearts. Do not you see there are so many tombs in the city of Karkh, but none of them is known and visited as much as Ma'ruf al-Karkhi's tomb.”

How nice the friends of Allah have said:

“Tasawwuf or Sufism means to be a yâr (or friend) not a bâr (or burden)” In other words it means to bear everybody's burden but not to be a burden on anybody.

Especially with compassionate and devoted services, doors of mercy will be opened for the Muslim nation. Value of a service depends on the size of sacrifice and its performance with the feelings of worship. Again an accepted service is the one performed only for the sake of Allah the Almighty and without hurting the recipient's feelings. As it is stated by Abdullah b. Munazil (q.s.):

“Good manners in service are more precious than the service itself.”

Mawlana Jalal al-Din Rumi says about this fact:

“Work for the sake of Allah, Serve for the sake of Allah; what difference does it make for you if the populace accepts it or rejects it? Does not Allah suffice you as a profitable customer? What can humans give you when it is compared to what you can get from Allah? Therefore turn your eyes and soul to what you will attain from Allah the Almighty from the appreciation of humans.”^{22 23}

This is the level of highness and beauty to which Sufism wants to take human soul. In this regard, Amir Kulâl advices his disciple Bahauddin Naqshiband:

22. For the English translation of Mathnawi, I have benefited from *The Mathnawi of Jalâlûddîn Rûmî, edited from the oldest manuscripts available, with critical notes, translation & commentary*, ed. Reynold A. Nicholson, Konya Metropolitan Municipality, 2004

23. Vol. VI, verse 839



Value of a service depends on the size of sacrifice and its performance with the feelings of worship. An accepted service is the one performed only for the sake of Allah the Almighty and without hurting the recipient's feelings.



“Placate the souls, serve the weak. Protect the weak and stricken. They are such people that have no expectation from public. However, most of them live with complete ease of mind and modesty in gratitude to Allah. Search and find these kind of people.”

In fact Bahauddin Naqshiband (q.s.) served the sick and stricken, wounded animals and cleaned the roads for seven years in order to achieve nothingness or opposite of pride and vanity in the early years of his adherence to Sufi order. He narrates:

“I worked in the way my master ordered me. I did all the services. My ego reached to such a level that when I see a creation of Allah crossing across the street I would stop and wait until it passed. My service continued for seven years. And at the end of these years such a level manifested to me that I started to feel their whimpers as seeking refuge to Allah the Almighty.”

Allah the Almighty states in the Qur'an about the righteous Muslims the following:

“...they strive with one another in hastening to good deeds.” (3; 114) And the most distinguished product of these righteous believers is the religious foundations. Endowed people are the Prophet, friends of Allah and those who were trained by them. They carried the excitement of faith in their hearts to all corners of the world and wrote the golden pages of history.

It is interesting to note that there were about one hundred and twenty thousand Companions ready at the farewell pilgrimage. More than one hundred

“Good manners in service are more precious than the service itself.”

Abdullah b. Munazil (q.s.)

thousand of them spread around the world and endowed themselves to the sake of Allah. They died faraway from their homes. In fact tombs of sons of Othman and Abbas (may Allah pleased with them) are in Samarkand and tombs of several Companions are in Istanbul. Those who stayed behind in Mecca and Medina protected the center of Islamic state and took care of these cities' services.

Khalid b. Zaid Abu Ayyub al-Ansari came to the gates of Istanbul twice even though he was around 80 years old and was martyred there. This was one of the exemplary efforts of the Companions to invite humanity to Islam and to save them both in this world and in the Hereafter. Their love and excitement to serve humanity and their struggle to attain the eternal life motivate to spread their services all around the world.

Wahb b. Kabsha (may Allah be pleased with him) is another great exemplary figure of serving human beings. His tomb is in China.²⁴ The Prophet (pbuh) sent him to China to convey the message of Islam; whereas in those days China was a yearlong travel away from Arabia. After serving in China for a very long time, this Companion set out to Medina in order to relieve his longing for the Messenger of Allah (pbuh). He arrived at Medina a year later after a very difficult journey, but unfortunately he could not see the Prophet (pbuh) for he had passed away.

24. There is a tomb attributed to Sa'd b. Abi Waqqas (May Allah be pleased with him) in Guangzhou, China. It is a known historical fact that companions' tombs have maintained and protected the religious feelings of the public. In fact there are several examples proving this fact in the cities of Middle Asia, like Samarkand, Bukhara, Turkistan and Tashkent.



*"... and they
strive with
one another
in hastening
to good
deeds..."*
(Qur'an 3; 114)



As a matter of fact what we all try to reach is salvation of our soul, or the attainment of peace and tranquility, whether we are aware of it or not. And this is an inner treasure which can be attained by serving human kind with the same joy of worshipping Allah the Almighty.

Thinking his responsibility, he went back to China and passed away while giving service to Islam.

These altruistic services can only be tolerated by strong faith and love. Their love and spirit for helping people have become stars illuminating their paths.

Of course the noble Companions reached this level by following the Prophet (pbuh)'s training, particularly the following nine principles:

1. Serving Allah the Almighty; willingly following His orders and prohibitions and exerting all efforts in the path of exalting the word of Allah.
2. Serving the Prophet (pbuh); loving him and helping people live according to his Sunnah.
3. Serving the elders of Islam; showing respect, loyalty and fidelity
4. Serving parents; gaining their contentment without showing them any disrespect
5. Serving the offspring; raising them as righteous Muslims
6. Serving relatives; visiting and helping them.
7. Serving the believers; sharing both their joy and pain
8. Serving all of humanity; doing their best in benefiting people with their hands and tongues
9. Serving creation; Showing compassion to all existence.

In this respect, Musa Topbas (q.s.) often narrated the following sayings of Ali Ramiteni:

"There are many people helping others but reproachfully reminding their kindness to them. However there are very few who consider serving others as a blessing. Consider having the opportunity to help others as a blessing and feel grateful to those you helped; everybody will be pleased with you and their complaints will decrease."

As a matter of fact what we all try to reach is salvation of our soul, or the attainment of peace and tranquility, whether we are aware of it or not. And this is an inner treasure which can be attained by serving human kind with the same joy of worshipping Allah the Almighty. That is why believers, who consciously serve creation, know to find opportunities and means to serve under any circumstances. He is more determined and eager to help humans for the sake of Allah the Almighty than those who help others for worldly benefits.

When eagerness to serve others settled in the heart, it transforms the servant into a traveler of eternity. The heart frees itself from the harshness of Hajjaj the oppressor²⁵ and wraps itself into the fur of compassion. Knowledge, art, and ethics gained with this spirituality attain enchanting eternity. Therefore the real and sincere services are the fruits of cordial maturity. Those kinds of hearts are the places of Divine sight.

25. Al-Hajjāj ibn Yūsuf (661-714) was a military governor of the Umayyad caliphate.



"There are many people helping others but reproachfully reminding their kindness to them. However there are very few who consider serving others as a blessing. Consider having the opportunity to help others as a blessing and feel grateful to those you helped; everybody will be pleased with you and their complaints will decrease."

Ali Ramiteni (q.s.)



And yet what a great loss to spend life distant from such cordial virtues! How blessed are those who filled their hearts with real love for service!

Dear Lord! Fill our hearts with the love, rapture and excitement of attaining your contentment. Bless us with the same excitement of the Companions for serving creation!

Amin!



Service is a requirement and a result of faith in Allah.

Islam is revival of humanity

The main object and claim of every system of thought is to raise the state of human beings and bring human relations to a higher level. However none of the manmade systems could reach a point which Islam has succeeded to achieve. The main reason for this is that manmade systems depend on the limited capabilities of the human intellect. On the other hand, since Islam is the product of Our Lord's Divine volition, it created a balanced system between humanity and the reality of universe. Human beings' recognition of themselves and other creation, and their systems established to regulate their own affairs is trivial compared to the infinite power of Allah the Almighty, which is why, contrary to their claims, most philosophical systems and religions created by humans have not been able to show humanity the right path. They have left the human state destitute rather than fulfilled.

The result of most systems from Freud, who dragged humanity to an ethical collapse, to Marx who claimed to take humanity to economical prosperity has been the opposite of their claims. In the end, they caused social disorder and misery.

It is a historical fact that the Prophet (pbuh) embraced humanity, which was drowning in oppression and anarchy, with compassion and mercy. He also presented the best example to humanity by his merciful and affectionate behavior. Before his prophethood, human beings were such people that were fighting, oppressing and attacking each other starting from their childhood. But in his



*When
eagerness to
serve others
settled in
the heart, it
transforms
the servant
into a
traveler of
eternity.*



blessed hands every one of them were saved from all blameworthy characteristics and became bright and exceptional individuals like “stars in the heaven.” There are several exemplary incidents in the lives of these people called “distinguished Companions.” The following example is taken from Mus’ab b. Umair’s life.

Mus’ab b. Umair (r.a.) went to the land of Abd-i Ashal and sons of Zafar in Medina together with As’ad b. Zurarah (r.a.). In those days Sa’d b. Mu’az and Usayd b. Hudayr were the leaders of sons of Abd-i Ashal. They were polytheists. When Sa’d heard Mus’ab’s arrival, he told Usayd:

“What are you waiting for? Go and take these guys away. They are here to trick our weak and stricken people.”

Usayd came to Mus’ab b. Umayr and As’ad b. Zurarah and started to abuse them. He directed his spear at them and said:

“If you want to live, get out of here!”

Mus’ab (r.a.) replied him smiling:

“If you sit and listen, we have some thing to tell you. You are a clever and prudent person. If you like what we say, you can accept them; if you do not like, you can stay away from us.”

Usaid thought for a while then:

“You are right” and left his spear and started to listen.

*Let those
who come
to kill you
revive in
you*

Having listened, he liked what he said and converted to Islam. Then he peacefully left and went to Sa'd:

"I listened to them and saw nothing wrong about what they said."

Sa'd got pretty upset and went to Mus'ab. Mus'ab (may Allah be pleased with him) greeted him similarly and appeased him. He gently explained some Divine facts to Sa'd. This time Sa'd was blessed with conversion to Islam.

Of course this incident reveals the level that the Companions reached under the discipline of the Prophet (pbuh). Those fortunate people wrote the principle of "those who come to kill you should be revived in you" to the pages of history.

In this context The Messenger of Allah (pbuh) forgave many criminals even Wahshi, his uncle's killer and treated them with mercy. For him (pbuh) mercy and forgiveness always came before anger. Many devastating fires of heedlessness and corruption were extinguished by the river of truth he brought. People of his era, who were characterized by famous Turkish poet Mehmed Akif Ersoy as "*If a man is toothless, first his brothers would eat him*", were saved from this savagery. They became humans who would say on the battle ground: "take this water to my brother" while he, himself, was burning from extreme thirst.

The Prophet (pbuh), who took his people to the peaks of spirituality, was always in front of his spiritual caravan. In fact at the beginning of



*"By Allah!
I am not
afraid that
you will
worship
others along
with Allah
after my
death, but
I am afraid
that you
will fight
with one
another for
the worldly
things."*
(Bukhari, Janaiz,
71)



last century a group of scholars gathered in La Hague, Netherlands and selected one hundred most influential men of human history. Even though the selection committee was consisted only Christian scholars, they had to select The Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) as the most influential man of human history based on ethical criteria, which they looked for in a candidate.

Again it is worth to mention that almost ninety percent of the Companions converted Islam just because of the Prophet's perfect personality and beautiful conduct called excellent exemplar (*al-uswa al-hasana*). Even those who were the Prophet's ardent enemy never called him "liar" or "oppressor," when they attempted to defame him, they could only praise his beautiful conduct.

Those who most sincerely accept Islam and want to serve Islam should know that this blessed path primarily aims to reinvigorate humanity. Every human being should be approached as the noblest of all creation. For the object of Islam is to make the exemplary manners dominant characteristics of human beings. This means to clean all incidental negative qualities of humans and revive them in their original nature. This is only achievable by reinvigorating some spiritual beauties.

That is why Islam pays attention to the conduct and ethical maturity of humans starting the day they were born. And it has succeeded to transform its followers into personalities to whom everybody admires. Islam has given maturity with angelic attributes to many heedless people, who lived like

*Let's become
friends,
Let's make
our affairs
easy
Let's love
and be
loved,
The world
will not be
left to any-
one.*

animals. For instance Umar b. al-Khattab (r.a.), who had buried his own daughter alive, became such a gentle Muslim that he was afraid even to hurt ants.

In this regard Islam represents a soul approaching humans with love and compassion. The sense of responsibility emanating from the seeds of mercy takes human beings to perfection in manners and happiness in both worlds. For Islam is revival of humanity. All manners born by sublime system of Islam are the most humane ones. Yunus Emre says in this regard:

*Let's become friends,
Let's make our affairs easy
Let's love and be loved,
The world will not be left to anyone.*

This sense of mercy was so great in our history that it made to the captive enemy commander say that "O mercy! How cruel you are, you even made me love my enemy."

Nowadays some unfortunate and heedless ones can pronounce the name of Islam together with the concept of "terror." In a way they are trying to plaster the sun with mud. They usually choose innocent people to spread fright and terror and to influence the populace with an imaginative and nameless danger. On the other hand Islam orders to embrace even the guilty and the peccable with mercy and forgiveness. Therefore is it imaginable to think that Islam would accept to intimidate and frighten the innocent?

Since the emergence of Islam, it has treated everybody, believer or nonbeliever, with justice



*"Take to
forgiveness
and enjoin
good and
turn aside
from the
ignorant."
(Qur'an 7: 199)*



*O Ali!" .¹⁴⁸
By Allah!
If a single
person
embraces
Islam at
your hands
(i.e. through
you), that
will be
better for
you than the
"red camels
Bukhari, Kitab
(al-Jihad, 143*

and compassion. It strongly prohibited all kinds of destructive actions against property, life and nature. It obligates the state to protect life, property, honor and family and to provide psychological well being, social order and balance. There is not even remotely connection between the real Islamic thought and terror. It should also be known that Islam prohibits not just terror but also all kinds of action leading to it.

Muslim b. Harith (r.a.) narrates:

The Messenger of Allah (pbuh) sent us to a battle. When we got close to our destination, I speeded up my horse and passed my friends. I talked to the village community and they converted Islam. In this way there was no need left for battle. However some of my friends who are unaware of the sensitivity of the situation reproached me saying:

"We lost the loot because of you." When we came back to the Prophet (pbuh), they told him what I had done. The Prophet (pbuh) called me and praised me for my action:

"You should know that Allah rewarded you for each of the people you saved today." Then he continued: "Let me write a letter suggesting you to future Muslim administrators." Then he has the letter written and he sealed and gave it to me.²⁶

Another exemplary scene is as follows:

Upon the massacre of seventy teachers in Bir Ma'unah tragedy and some other attacks, the Prophet (pbuh) started to send soldiers along with every group of teacher he sent. Those soldiers

26. See Ibn Sa'd *Tabaqat*, VII, 419-20.

were not allowed to use their arms unless it was absolutely necessary. Once Khalid b. Walid used his sword over the limits the Prophet (pbuh) had given. When the Prophet (pbuh) heard what happened, He sadly said: *"O Allah! I am free from what Khalid bin Al-Walid has done,"* and repeated it thrice. Then he sent Ali b. Abi Talib to the place where the incident happened and had him paid the blood money not just for humans but also for animals even for dogs.²⁷

The Ottomans, who accepted this conduct as a motto for themselves, did not force non-Muslims to convert Islam and never persecuted the local public by massacre or cultural imperialism. They accepted non-Muslims in their lands as a trust of Allah and treated them accordingly. That is why saying of "This country will not gain its freedom, unless the Ottoman horses drink water from Vistula River" became a proverb among the people of Lechia.

From this respect the Ottoman Empire became a country where other nations preferred to live. In fact while the Ottoman armies were forcing against Istanbul's walls, Christian Grand duke Notaras's respond for the request to ask help from Pope:

"I would prefer to see Turkish turban here, instead of seeing cardinal's headgear."

We, as Muslims, have to live showing mercy and compassion to all creation especially today. And this is the most effective way to get closer to Allah the Almighty.

27. See Bukhari, *Ahkam*, 35; Ibn Kathir, *al-Bidayah wa-al-Nihayah*, IV, 304-05.



Those who serve others should be very sensitive in their service and pay attention to in their transaction.



Islam strongly prohibits all kinds of destructive actions against property, life and nature. It obligates the state to protect life, property, honor and family and to provide psychological well being, social order and balance.

The following narration is a very good example to show a believer's state of mind:

Bayazid al-Bistami stopped under a tree, had his meal and then continued his way. After a while he saw an ant on his bag and sadly thought:

“I separated this poor animal from its land.”

He immediately turned back to the place where he had meal and left the ant, because Bayazid knew the significance of showing mercy to all creation for the sake of their Creator.

Islam, which makes people to show such high level of compassion to animals, regards human beings much more glorious and asks them to move towards sublime horizons. In other words when human being's essence of “the best of creation (*ahsan-i taqwim*)” is considered; the significance which should be given to concept of humanity will be better understood. This state of mind can be observed in all principles of Islam regarding human beings. One of the objects of Islam is to take human beings to such sublime levels that even angels envy.

Today the reason for witnessing so much oppression and anarchy in the world is to walk away from elevating characteristics such as Divine love and mercy and to follow the self's carnal desires. This is a natural result of being bereft of the beauties of Islam. In this way to better understand Islam, to listen what it says heart and soul and to realize the transience of this world will provide the opportunity for the salvation of humanity. In other words, humanity's real need is to learn the principles of Islam and to

regulate our lives according to these principles. Is not the following line of Yunus Emre: "*Love creation; because of the Creator*" a life preserver for a person who deviates from the reality, which will save him both in this world and in the Hereafter? And, as Muslims, to provide them help is our responsibility. Modern means of transportation and communication increase our responsibility. Utilizing technological advances in conveying the message of Islam to humanity and scattering the mist of negative publicity over Islam exist today more than ever. This fact makes our individual and social responsibilities a universal one. To better understand this situation, let's see the following narration:

A doctor in America converted Islam and organized a ceremony in a mosque for his conversion. In the ceremony to which several Muslims from near and far attended, the doctor was going to make a speech and explain why he had chosen Islam. Before starting to his speech, he said:

"I have a question for you. I would like to get its answer before my speech." Then he asked:

"Both my parents died as Christians. I would like to ask you their state in the Hereafter."

Congregation started to get worried. Could their answer upset the new convert? In this manner they answered:

"If they did not get the message of Islam in their lives, they are excused. They are waiting at the world between this and the Hereafter. Their state will appear after the Judgment Day."



*We, as
Muslims,
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showing
mercy and
compassion
to all
creation
especially
today.
And this is
the most
effective
way to get
closer to
Allah the
Almighty.*



When human being's essence of "the best of creation (ahsan-i taqwim)" is considered, the significance which should be given to concept of humanity will be better understood. This state of mind can be observed in all principles of Islam regarding human beings.

Upon this respond, the doctor continued his words:

"O Muslims! Both my parents were more knowledgeable, more ethical and fairer than I am. However, because of the pressure of the society they lived as Christians and passed away as Christians. They thought the innocent prophet Jesus was god. They knew nothing about Islam. Maybe they just heard its name.

May Allah be pleased with you all. You came to America and built this mosque. You told me about Islam and became the reason for my conversion. Thank you for that. But my mother and father are two retired people. Why had not one of you approached them and told them what you told me? If you had done that, I have no doubt that they would accept Islam more enthusiastically than I did.

I know faith is fate. However, this world is the world of causes. Why did you refrain from performing your responsibility? I believe that your neglect and heedlessness is the reason for their death without the blessing of Islam. They will hold you responsible for that and so will I." Then he cried and started to talk about his reasons for conversion.

This exemplary incident should horrify us and make us think. For conveying the message of Islam is our Divine responsibility as much as we could. And this responsibility is now heavier with the advanced means of communication. Not just the people who are away from us but also people around us will hold us responsible for our neglect and insufficiency in conveying the message of Islam.

We should clearly mention that religion cannot be used as an instrument for political issues. In this manner religious facts and political issues should be separated. For instance "Kharijites" were claiming that whatever they did, they did it in the name of Islam, but on the contrary their actions were demands of a political thought and anarchy which is completely outside the Islamic thinking. Throughout history, people, groups and sometimes even states which want to break the society's peace for their own benefit and make profit out of disorder have performed these kind of political maneuvers. These centers used elements accepted lawful by the populace, especially religion, in order to present their unjust case as a just one. Then they began campaigns that defamed religious people. We can mention what Abdullah b. Saba, who prepared the grounds for the Battle of Jamal, said to his supporters:

"O people! Your life and honor depends on disorder and fight in the society. Then make them fight each other. Tomorrow when those people started to fight, provoke the fight. Do not let them occupy themselves with anything else. For that, people whom you are together with should think that it is necessary to keep the fight going between Ali, Zubair, Talha and those who think like them, and that it is necessary to turn away from something that you do not want, that is peace...." (I. Canan, *Hadis Ansiklopedisi*, XIII, 334)

These words can be keys to understanding what underlies the Muslims' state of heedlessness and discord in the past and the present. During the last century we observe that the Muslim world is left



Today the reason for witnessing so much oppression and anarchy in the world is to walk away from elevating characteristics such as Divine love and mercy and to follow the self's carnal desires.



leaderless and has been struggling in various types of conflicts and battles. In order to figure out the real reason behind all this hostility, we need to carefully analyze the meaning of the above-mentioned lines.

How appropriately stated by Jalal al-Din al-Rumi (q.s.):

*"O you who sows the seed of thistles in the world! Come to your senses and be warned not to look for the thorn you sown in the rosary where nightingales sing; do not blame rosary for your own mistakes."*²⁸

"With which mental state you look for deficiencies and blemishes on the surface of the moon; try to pick up thorns in the paradise. O you who look for thorns instead of roses! If you go into paradise, you could not find thorns other than yourself"

Rumi then warns Muslims against such makers of mischief:

"There are those who ate humans like beasts. Their greetings and words of "la hawla" are all blurry. For their hearts are beds for devils, and they, themselves, are human devils."

"Some others look like butchers who would like to skin their friends. On the one hand he says "my dear, my love", on the other hand he prepares his knife. In short he deceives you with nice and pleasing words in order to skin you. And yet what a pitiful state of those who swallow the opium given by their enemies."

Every person in this state uses humanness as a mask because he is unaware of real human dignity;

**"Love
creation;
because of
the Creator"**

Yunus Emre

28. Vol. II, verse 153

he has not tasted Divine love and has not had a share of compassion. If these had been ideas, they would have killed reality; If they were poets, they would have corrupted the souls; if they were defenders of morality, they would have destroyed it. Rumi says about them:

“If he takes a rose in his hand, it becomes a thorn for others; and if he goes to a friend, he bites like a snake.”

Allah the Almighty states the circumstances of this state of heedlessness:

“And when it is said to them, Do not make mischief in the land, they say: We are but peace-makers. Now surely they themselves are the mischief makers, but they do not perceive.” (2; 11-12)

Then the important thing is not a person's personal decisions, wishes and ambitions but Allah the Almighty's desires and requests. Those who use religious motifs and principles as a cover for their heinous aims are the ones who lose Allah the Almighty's contentment. In fact Allah the Almighty says the following about those who corrupted the world and even killed their Prophets:

“For this reason did We prescribe to the children of Israel that whoever slays a soul, unless it be for manslaughter or for mischief in the land, it is as though he slew all men; and whoever keeps it alive, it is as though he kept alive all men; and certainly Our messengers came to them with clear arguments, but even after that many of them certainly act extravagantly in the land.” (5; 32)



*“O you
who sows
the seed of
thistles in
the world!
Come to
your senses
and be
warned not
to look for
the thorn
you sown in
the rosary
where
nightingales
sing; do
not blame
rosary for
your own
mistakes.”*
Jalal al-Din al-Rumi



"O you who sows the seed of thistles in the world! Come to your senses and be warned not to look for the thorn you sown in the rosary where nightingales sing; do not blame rosary for your own mistakes."
Jalal al-Din al-Rumi

Because a murderer who unjustly kills a soul, by attacking that soul's innocence did not acknowledge that soul's right to live and encouraged others to commit the same act. Hence anyone who takes a life, deserves Allah the Almighty's rage and punishment as if he slew the entire humanity, according to Allah's Word. And saving a life is equal to saving all of humanity.

In this regard Mawlana Jalal al-Din Rumi (q.s.) resembles Islam to elixir:

"No one dies on the shores of the water of life" In this way he reflects the kindness of this religion.

We can say that all principles of Islam are circled around this type of sensitivity. In this respect Islam molds human beings first with correct faith then with good manners, mercy, serving humanity, knowledge, courtesy, obeying the law and high ethical standards. In this way it revives humanity in a real sense.

Nowadays the only characteristics that could save, deepen and adorn the soul is mercy. And the fruits of mercy are generosity, modesty, service, forgiveness and freedom from envy.

All sincere services reaching humanity without worldly considerations transcend the self and bring the servant closer to Allah the Almighty. Only by serving creation, the doors of hope in our hearts can be opened, therefore increasing our chances to unite with Allah the Almighty. Otherwise the selfish tendencies and qualities seen in our actions are very

difficult to eradicate since they shadow the main goal of our birth.

In short, faith and good manners constitute the foundations for Islamic peace and happiness. That is why righteous believers turn their mind and soul to Allah the Almighty and dedicate all their organs to do good and beneficial deeds. As was stated by Jalal al-Din Rumi: *"Oh, happy is the ugly one to whom the beauteous one has become a Companion; alas for one of rosy countenance with whom autumn has consorted!"*

O Allah! Bless our two worlds with the beauties of Islam. Protect us, our state, Muslim nation and entire humanity from all kinds of sedition and calamities.

Amin!



"And when it is said to them, Do not make mischief in the land, they say: We are but peace-makers. Now surely they themselves are the mischief makers, but they do not perceive."
(Qur'an 2; 11-12)



All sincere services reaching humanity without worldly considerations transcend the self and bring the servant closer to Allah the Almighty. Only by serving creation, the doors of hope in our hearts can be opened, therefore increasing our chances to unite with Allah the Almighty.

The Method of Spiritual Guidance and Mercy in Serving Humanity

For an action performed to serve creation there must be certain qualities in order gain the acceptance of Allah the Almighty. Most important of all is intention. The intention of any act must be to attain the contentment of Allah the Almighty, not to be known as that “generous person” or to hear the praise of others. Such pure intentions should not be shadowed by selfish feelings and ulterior motives aimed at satisfying the ego. Service should be done with mercy and kindness as well as extreme caution so not to hurt the recipient’s feelings.

In this regard, Erzurumlu Ibrahim Hakki’s following narration is a very exemplary one. “One day Ibrahim Hakki was invited to a village to give a sermon. A young non-Muslim servant was hired and sent to pick him up. They set off. There was only one ride and Ibrahim Hakki took turn with the young servant just like Umar (may Allah be pleased with him) did when he was on his way to Jerusalem with his slave. Even though young servant protested saying: “if villager heard this, they would reproach me and would not pay my money,” Ibrahim Hakki told him:

“O my son! We do not know what will happen on our final moments. You are worried about villagers, while I am worried about the great judgment we will face in front of our Lord.” and started to take turns getting on the ride.

It was servant’s turn when they were entering the village. Young servant refused to get on the

horse, but Ibrahim Hakki insisted and he went into the village in front of the horse.

Just like the young servant expected, villagers circled around them and started to scold him. Then Ibrahim Hakki explained them the situation and they stopped scolding. Just then a villager told the young servant:

“You saw and lived such wonderful merits today. Why do not you accept the message of Islam?” To this, young servant responded:

“If you are inviting to your religion, I will never accept that. However if you are inviting this saintly man’s religion, I have already accepted it when we were our way here.”

This exemplary action of a man of Allah shows us the conduct of mercy and spiritual guidance in serving others. In a way to be able to treat others as humans deserve means to be able to look at creation by virtue of the Creator which is why righteous souls look at human beings as the vicegerent of Allah the Almighty on the earth. And they live aware of the fact that a Divine secret was breathed into them.²⁹ These righteous believers do not turn their backs to sinners no matter how many sins have been committed, because of the perfection in the essence of human beings. They neither lose their hope from sinners nor let the sinners lose hope from themselves. In fact the most often repeated names of Allah the Almighty in the Qur'an are “*al Rahman* – The Most Gracious” and “*al Rahim* – The Most Merciful” and



The important thing is not a person's personal decisions, wishes and ambitions but Allah the Almighty's desires and requests.

29. See Qur'an 15: 29



*Mawlana
Jalal al-Din
Rumi (q.s.)
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of the water
of life" In
this way he
reflects the
kindness of
this religion.*

there is also a chapter named *Rahman* in the Qur'an, which also begins with the same Divine name.

Therefore approaching humans from this perspective, i.e. with mercy and guidance, is the most congruent with the pleasure of Allah the Almighty and the most blessed method of approach. It also consists of a lofty characteristic, which could bring the hidden qualities of human beings into light, because, this is such a manner that brings fineness, maturity, love and closeness to Allah the Almighty to both its performer and the recipient. It is also a potion which makes the great men as the great men, such as the famous Sufis Yunus Emre and Mawlana Jalal al-Din Rumi. It is like the elixir, which can give life to the dead souls.

That is why both the contents of Sufism and its methods for conveying the message of Islam present a great significance. It is a historical fact that when social order in Anatolia was shaken up by the Mongol invasion, Sufis, such as Yunus Emre and Mawlana Jalal al-Din Rumi, ensured peace and tranquility for the suffocated society. These sufis considered heedless people as patients who were seeking a cure. They made sure to keep their distance from "hate and enmity." The following lines of Yunus Emre exemplify this attitude:

I did not come to fight

I came for love

The hearts are the houses of the Friend (Allah)

I came to appease the hearts

Since these great figures came to appease the hearts, they always looked at people through their own hearts; Because they treated everyone with mercy and love, they have become the cause for many to choose Islam. If they did the opposite, they would lose their connection with these people on the edge of a cliff and it would be impossible to explain them the message of Islam. And this would be contrary to Divine will. For Allah the Almighty wants His servants to be saved from the swamps they sank, and He sent thousands of prophets throughout the history of mankind and ordered them to purify people's souls with the gentlest approach. For the same object, man of Allah carried on the same approach in the spiritual training of mankind.

Our Lord, who is the only source of mercy and compassion, explains the method of inviting people to the message of Islam as follows:

“Call to the way of your Lord with wisdom and goodly exhortation, and have disputation with them in the best manner; surely your Lord best knows those who go astray from His path, and He knows best those who follow the right way.” (16; 125)

“And who speaks better than he who calls to Allah while he himself does good, and says: I am surely of those who submit? And not alike are the good and the evil. Repel (evil) with what is best, when lo! he between whom and you was enmity would be as if he were a warm friend.” (41; 33-34)

By following this Divine approach, several thorn-like hearts transformed into roses and dark souls overwhelmed with the light of Islam.



“So when I have made him complete and breathed into him of My spirit, fall down making obeisance to him.”
(Qur'an 15; 29)



From this fact, Jalal al-Din Rumi states the significance of guiding both non-Muslims and sinners and the language which needs to be used in spiritual guidance:

“Although the iron was dark and devoid of light, polishing cleared away the darkness from it. The iron saw (suffered) the polishing and made its face fair, so that images could be seen therein.”

“You have made the water turbid: do not make it more (so). Do not stir it up (befoul it): let this water become clear, and (then) behold the moon and stars circling therein. For man is like the water of the river: when it becomes turbid, you cannot see its bottom.”

To be able to treat others as humans deserve means to be able to look at creation by virtue of the Creator which is why righteous souls look at human beings as the vicegerent of Allah the Almighty on the earth.

As it is stated by Mawlana Jalal al-Din Rumi (q.s.), the human soul is like clear water; however, when it becomes turbid with sins and horrid acts, nothing can be seen in it. Then in order to see the pearls of spirituality and the lights of truth, we need to clear the water. Thus, the object of Sufism is to purify souls, and bring peace to individuals and society. For Allah the Almighty adorned human beings with elegance, grace and lofty qualities. A person's value increases as much as he improves these qualities. Hearts filled with spirituality are the place of manifestation for righteous and pious deeds and spiritual states. By this way a servant achieves the state of “being the perfect exemplar.”

Consequently no matter how deep a person is in committing sins and polytheism, he cannot be left without spiritual guidance. Numerous examples of this are as follows.

The Messenger of Allah (pbuh) sent one of his Companions to his uncle Hamza's murderer, Wahshi, to invite him to Islam. Wahshi responded:

"O Muhammad! While you state Allah the Almighty's ruling **"And they who do not call upon another god with Allah and do not slay the soul, which Allah has forbidden except in the requirements of justice, and (who) do not commit fornication and he who does this shall find a requital of sin; The punishment shall be doubled to him on the day of resurrection, and he shall abide therein in abasement;"** (25; 68-69), how can you invite me to Islam? I have committed all those horrid acts. How can there be a way of salvation for me?"

Upon this Allah the Almighty revealed:

فُلْ يَا عِبَادِيَ الَّذِينَ أَسْرَفُوا عَلَىٰ أَنْفُسِهِمْ لَا تَقْنَطُوا
مِنْ رَّحْمَةِ اللَّهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَغْفِرُ الذُّنُوبَ جَمِيعًا
إِنَّهُ هُوَ الْغَفُورُ الرَّحِيمُ

"Say: O my servants! who have acted extravagantly against their own souls, do not despair of the mercy of Allah; surely Allah forgives the faults altogether; surely He is the Forgiving the Merciful." (39; 53)

Finally, Wahshi, relieved with the glad tidings repented and converted to Islam saying:

"Dear Lord! How broad your forgiveness is."



"Call to the way of your Lord with wisdom and goodly exhortation, and have disputation with them in the best manner; surely your Lord best knows those who go astray from His path, and He knows best those who follow the right way."
(Qur'an 16; 125)



Therefore approaching humans from this perspective, i.e. with mercy and guidance, is the most congruent with the pleasure of Allah the Almighty and the most blessed method of approach.

When the Companions heard this, they asked the Messenger of Allah:

“O Messenger of Allah! Is this mercy and compassion reserved for Wahshi or all Muslims?” Prophet (pbuh) said: “*It is for all Muslims.*”³⁰

Wahshi, who martyred Hamza (may Allah be pleased with him), became a Companion. And in spiritual excitement of Allah’s forgiveness and spiritual guidance, he risked his life and killed the false prophet, Musaylimah al-Kadhdhab, in a battle and gave an end to the social disorder. In a way this was his redemption for the murder of the Prophet’s uncle.

As it can be observed in the aforementioned narration, glad tidings of the highest levels of mercy and forgiveness were given to the sincerely repenting souls by the Prophet (pbuh) himself. In short, humanity has heard the comforting, healing and refreshing news from Prophet’s blessed lips. And no matter how sinful they are, humanity is also blessed by Allah the Almighty’s compassionate addressing, “**O My servants**”, for the sake of His Messenger.

Therefore it is a central principle to use the same compassionate, merciful and promising approach in order to save our community from the dangers and depression of modern materialism. It is more beneficial to win the hearts instead of pushing them into mental fights; because, several of them might even have a mental condition, which is why it would often be impossible to win them through “fights and

30. See Haythami, *Majma’ al-Zawaaid*, X, 214-15.

disputes," because negatively conditioned minds are closed to accept mental evidences. In order to accustom the hearts with the truth, they first need to be approached with tolerance and their lofty qualities should be unearthed. This is a much more effective method.

Before criticizing, reproaching a person who has sunken deep into sedition and sins, and requiring him to follow the rules of Islam, we should give priority to win their hearts. For that, we should try to establish an affectionate and friendly relationship, which could provide a more effective ground to win their hearts. After preparing the hearts, mistakes can be slowly corrected. Also material and spiritual treatment and compliments should be taken into consideration for their role in increasing the effectiveness of the results. In this regard, Prophet's (pbuh) following saying needs to be remembered:

"My intercession is for the members of my ummah who committed great sins." (Abu Dawud, *Sunnah*, 20)

Jalal al-Din Rumi describes the Messenger of Allah's (pbuh) approach to the sinners in the following lines:

"Medicine seeks sick and wounded people to cure. Wherever a pain is, the remedy goes there: Wherever a hole or lowland is, the water runs there."

"If you want water of mercy, go, become lowly and then drink the wine of mercy."

However, for getting better effects from a medicine or an ointment, a wound must first be disinfected from germs. Similarly diseased souls



*I did not
come to fight
I came for
love
The hearts
are the
houses of the
Friend
(Allah)
I came to
appease the
hearts*
Yunus Emre



must first be cleaned from germs of sin; in other words they should first be washed by water of penitence. Medicine, or intercession, will come after the cleansing.

Another saying of the Prophet (pbuh):

“Who sincerely repents is like the one who has never sinned.” (Ibn Majah, *Zuhd*, 30) on the one hand gives good news for those who have sinned, and on the other hand explains the pre-condition for this good news.

Both prophets and men of Allah have carefully followed this sublime method. Mercy is considered as the first fruit of faith and servitude to Allah is defined by the following two terms:

a. *“Ta’zim li Amrillah”* which means to fulfill Allah’s orders with veneration.

b. *“Shafkat li Khalqillah”* that is to show mercy and compassion to the creation of Allah the Almighty for the sake of their Creator.

A friend of Allah, Fudayl b. ‘Iyad, is one of the best examples of these faithful hearts who follow these rules. He was seen crying. People asked:

“Why are you crying?”

He replied:

“I am crying for a Muslim who has oppressed me; because I am worried about his woeful state in the Hereafter.”

Rumi explains what guides these perfect men to such a high level of mercy:

“Although the iron was dark and devoid of light, polishing cleared away the darkness from it. The iron saw (suffered) the polishing and made its face fair, so that images could be seen therein.”
Jalal al-Din Rumi

“When the seas of Mercy begin to surge, even stones drink the Water of Life. He that has been dead a hundred years comes forth from the grave; the accursed devil becomes an object of envy to the houris on account of his beauty.”³¹

It has been narrated that Ibrahim b Adham cleaned a drunk’s dirty mouth. He responded to those who asked why he had done that:

“It would be a disrespect to leave a mouth dirty that was created to utter Allah’s names.”

When the man became sober, people told him:

“Ibrahim Adham, ascetic of Khorasan, washed your mouth.”

The man felt ashamed and repented. Ibrahim Adham was told in his dream:

“You washed his mouth for the sake of Allah the Almighty; and Allah washed his heart for you.”

Allah the Almighty says to the Prophet (pbuh) and all Muslims in his person:

خُذِ الْعَفْوَ وَأُمِرْ بِالْعُرْفِ

“Take to forgiveness and enjoin good...” (7; 199)

Of course the Prophet (pbuh) was the best example of the application of this command. Even angels envied his perfect morality, mercy and forgiveness. Here is an example:

31. vol. V, 2281-83



“You have made the water turbid: do not make it more (so). Do not stir it up (befoul it): let this water become clear, and (then) behold the moon and stars circling therein. For man is like the water of the river: when it becomes turbid, you cannot see its bottom.”
Jalal al-Din Rumi



The object of Sufism is to purify souls, and bring peace to individuals and society. For Allah the Almighty adorned human beings with elegance, grace and lofty qualities. A person's value increases as much as he improves these qualities.

On the day of the conquest of Mecca, the Messenger of Allah (pbuh) declared a general amnesty. Mecca, which had been witnessing nothing but oppression and enmity, was living an indefinable manifestation of mercy, compassion and love. However, a Meccan named Fudalah came closer to the Prophet (pbuh) to attempt an assassination. The Messenger of Allah (pbuh) was Divinely inspired about Fudalah's intention and, without showing any sign of panic and anger, asked Fudalah:

"Are you Fudalah?"

He replied:

"Yes, I am"

Then the Mercy of the universe (pbuh) said:

"O Fudalah! Repent for your intentions." and put his blessed hands on Fudalah's chest.

Fudalah immediately repented and accepted the message of Islam. He became one of the most beloved Companions of the prophet (pbuh).³²

Of course, this state is the perfect manifestation of the principle "those who come to kill must revive in you. There are numerous manifestations of this principle in Islamic history. In fact Umar (may Allah be pleased with him) and many others became the precious fruits of this understanding. Rumi says:

*"(Because) He (Allah), from the perfection of His mercy and waves of His bounty, bestows rain and moisture on every barren soil."*³³

32. Ibn Hisham, *al-Sirah*, IV, 46; Ibn Kathir, *al-Sirah*, III, 583.

33. vol. IV, 1489

“O He who invites to the right path! The remedy of the evil eye is the good eye. It makes the evil eye naught beneath its kick. (Divine) mercy has the precedence (over Divine wrath): it (the good eye) is (derived) from (Divine) mercy, (while) the evil eye is the product of (Divine) wrath and execration. Therefore the good eye overcomes the evil eye for it is from Divine mercy. This state is the manifestation of the sacred Hadith: “My mercy overcomes My vengeance” (Bukhari, Tawhid, 55). You should know that Allah’s mercy always overcomes His vengeance: hence every prophet prevailed over his adversary.”³⁴

“Then violence and complaint are not the means of averting calamity. Its remedy is beneficence and pardon and kindness. Prophetic warning of “Alms is a means of averting calamity”³⁵ should bring you to your senses. Now better understand the method to heal the maladies and calamities.”³⁶

“However, do not forget that to show mercy to oppressors is to oppress the weak. To show mercy to thieves and any sinister-handed (noxious) person is to inflict blows and have no mercy on the weak.”³⁷

The balance should be very well set. Because even though Allah the Almighty is *Ghafur al-Rahim* or the Most Forgiving and the Most Merciful, he also is *Azizun zuntiqam* or the Mighty and the Inflictor of retribution and the Avenger of the injustices and oppressions. That is why in one of his narrations, the Prophet (pbuh) said:

34. vol. V, 513-515

35. See Tirmidhi, *Zakat*, 28; Suyuti, *al-Jami' al-Saghir*, I, 108.

36. vol. VI, 2590-91

37. vol. VI, 4261



No matter how deep a person is in committing sins and polytheism, he cannot be left without spiritual guidance.



Hearts filled with spirituality are the place of manifestation for righteous and pious deeds and spiritual states. By this way a servant achieves the state of "being the perfect exemplar."

"Help your brother whether he is an oppressor or an oppressed,"

A man said, *"O Allah's Apostle! I will help him if he is oppressed, but if he is an oppressor, how shall I help him?"*

The Prophet said, *"By preventing him from oppressing (others), for that is how to help him."* (Bukhari, Ikrah, 7; Muslim, Birr, 62)

In short we would like to say that today people in our country in particular and people in the world in general are like wounded birds in respect to faith and Islam. It is essential to be merciful to heal their wounds. This can only be realized by following the aforementioned principles and methods.

Dear Lord! Include us among Your righteous servants who understand the meaning of "My mercy overcome My vengeance" and treat others with mercy and forgiveness.

Amin!



Gentleness and compassion in service

To look at human beings within the limits of Islamic principles requires looking at and esteeming their pure essence not their states contaminated by sins. A real believer regards a sinner like a bird with a broken wing, which needs attention and compassion. He feels the weight of appeasing and healing the sinner's soul in crisis. For showing compassion and mercy to all of creation for the sake of The Creator is the most effective agent, which takes the faithful to perfection and grace.

Islam has accepted moderation as its main principle in educating and guiding mankind. And this can be realized through gentleness in behavior. Starting from the Prophet's life, the Companions' and righteous believers' lives are teeming with examples of the most gentle methods for approaching to the sinners.

Abu al-Darda, one of the Companions of the Prophet (pbuh) was a judge in Damascus. On one occasion he heard people reproaching a sinner. He asked them:

"What would you do if you saw a man fall into a well?"

They replied: "We would lower a rope and try to rescue him," Then Abud al-Darda said: "Why don't you think to help this poor guy who fell in to the well of sins?" People were surprised: "Don't you hate sins?" Abu al-Darda gave them the following sapient answer: "I hate his sins not him."



"Say: O my servants! who have acted extravagantly against their own souls, do not despair of the mercy of Allah; surely Allah forgives the faults altogether; surely He is the For-giving the Merciful."
(Qur'an 39; 53)



Before criticizing, reproaching a person who has sunken deep into sedition and sins, and requiring him to follow the rules of Islam, we should give priority to win their hearts.

In this example, there are several sapient lessons, which Abu al-Darda aims to place in believing hearts. These lessons are lofty gleams reflecting from the orders and contentment of Allah the Almighty and His Messenger's distinguished morality. Throughout Islamic history, these lessons have become manifestations of maturity and became a rooted approach of guidance.

This approach does not suffocate a sinner in his sins; on the contrary it aims to save him in the sea of repentance by mercy, compassion, forgiveness and love. The Prophet (pbuh) politely approached even the most furious polytheists, such as Abu Jahl, and he (pbuh) did not occupy himself with their sins. He just invited them to purify themselves in faith's sea of salvation. It is stated in the following verse after that after a person's conversion past sins will be erased; they will even be exchanged with rewards.

إِلَّا مَنْ تَابَ وَآمَنَ وَعَمِلَ عَمَلًا صَالِحًا فَأُولَئِكَ
 يُبَدِّلُ اللَّهُ سَيِّئَاتِهِمْ حَسَنَاتٍ
 وَكَانَ اللَّهُ غَفُورًا رَّحِيمًا

“Except him who repents and believes and does a good deed; so these are they of whom Allah changes the evil deeds to good ones; and Allah is Forgiving, Merciful.” (25; 70)

Those who do not have a share from this noble clemency are the enemy of both themselves and all mankind. Those heedless people know nothing about

mercy and compassion. On the other hand, friends of Allah like Jalal al-Din Rumi and Yunus Emre, who have reached the very source of mercy, were loved not only by human beings but even by other creation and animals. They are like the roses of Paradise with their smiling faces and benevolent appearances. Even under very difficult circumstances, they continued to spread goodness in the world and healing the wounded. Maintaining a smiling face and a benevolent nature is important in this world; in other words, spreading goodness no matter what the circumstances are. How nicely Rumi expresses this issue:

“Because moon was not frightened and did not escape from the darkness, it got brightened up and the rose got its sweet scent for it got on well with the prickles.”

“Listen to this truth from the rose. Hear what it says: Why should I feel sad, why should I let myself down for being with the prickle; I attained my ability to smile for enduring my togetherness with the prickle, and because of enduring it, I got the capability to disperse beauty and emit sweet scent to the world.”

Esrefoğlu Rûmî summarizes the required approach to reach this state in his following verse:

*For the sake of friends
Poisons should be swallowed like a candy*

One of the Companions cursed a very alcoholic man who had been punished several times. When the Messenger of Allah (pbuh) heard this, he said,

“Do not curse him, for by Allah, I know for he loves Allah and His Apostle.” (Bukhari, *Kitab al-Hudud*, 5)



“Medicine
seeks
sick and
wounded
people
to cure.
Wherever
a pain is,
the remedy
goes there:
Wherever
a hole or
lowland is,
the water
runs there.”
Jalal al-Din Rumi



After having a depression, one of the disciples of the late Ramazanoğlu Mahmûd Sâmî (q.s.) got drunk and came to his teacher's door. When the man who opened the door reproached him saying:

“What is the matter with you? Do you know where you are?”

The poor man said:

“Is there any other door which can embrace me with compassion?”

When Mahmud Sami heard the conversation, he came to the door and invited his disciple inside, and appeased his broken heart. Upon his teacher's delicate approach, the man repented and joined the righteous believers.

“Being able to look at creation through the eyes of the Creator” is expressed in the following narration of the Prophet (pbuh):

“By Allah, you cannot enter Paradise unless you show mercy to each other.”

When the Companions said:

“O Messenger of Allah! We all are merciful.” He (pbuh) responded:

“(I do not mean) a mercy just for each other, but a mercy which comprises the entire creation, (yes) a mercy which comprises the entire creation.” (Hakim, Mustadrak, IV, 185)

No matter how far a person is away from the aim of his creation, he still has the high dignity of being a “human.” His sinking into sins because of his

“Who sincerely repents is like the one who has never sinned.”
(Ibn Majah, Zuhd, 30)

unawareness of the nobility in his essence is similar to the Black Stone's fall from the Ka'bah's wall and getting dirty. Even in such a state, believers would not stop respecting it. They would immediately pick it up and race with each other to place it to its lofty place. They would think its original place in Heaven and its value in essence. Humans are like Black Stone fell from the Heaven, and no matter how deep he sank into the sins, his essential value remains.

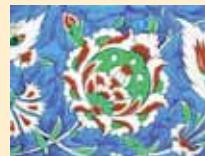
On the other hand no competent doctor would get upset his patient since why he got sick. Even if his sickness was his own fault, the doctor would consider it as a result of his patient's weakness. And instead of questioning him for his faults, the doctor would immediately start his treatment in order to ease his patient's pains. He would consider himself responsible for the treatment of his patient. A Sufi would feel the similar feelings of the doctor, and these feelings are like a life buoy for those who went astray.

Holding a life buoy out to a sinner and saving him from sinking more into his sins is a very cause for eternal happiness. The Prophet's (pbuh) warning to Ali (may Allah be pleased with him) during the Khaybar battle attracts our attention:

“O Ali! By Allah! If a single person embraces Islam at your hands (i.e. through you), that will be better for you than the red camels.” (Bukhari, Kitab al-Jihad, 143)

Same reality is expressed in the following verse:

وَمَنْ أَحْيَاهَا فَكَانَمَا أَحْيَا النَّاسَ جَمِيعاً



*“When
the seas
of Mercy
begin to
surge, even
stones drink
the Water
of Life. He
that has
been dead
a hundred
years comes
forth from
the grave;
the accursed
devil
becomes an
object of
envy to the
houris on
account of
his beauty.”*
Jalal al-Din Rumi



The balance should be very well set. Because even though Allah the Almighty is Ghafur al-Rahim or the Most Forgiving and the Most Merciful, he also is Azizun zuntiqam or the Mighty and the Inflictor of retribution and the Avenger of the injustices and oppressions.

“...and whoever keeps a soul alive, it is as though he kept alive all men;...” (5; 32)

This is a matter of faith. Of course disbelief is the most serious flaw of human feelings and thoughts. Because the chance to be saved from this greatest sin is much higher with gentle speaking, Allah the Almighty ordered Moses to use “*qawl layyin* or gentle talk” when He sent Moses to Pharaoh to deliver His message. Because the success in the invitation to the message of Islam is a very important pious deed which is a bridge to eternal happiness, as it is mentioned above. Allah the Almighty certainly knew the harshness of Pharaoh’s disbelief. Therefore we should follow a gentle approach even for the harshest disbelievers instead of reproaches, threats and emotional rampage. Rumi exemplifies this beautifully:

“Understand well Allah’s saying: “O Moses in presence of the Pharaoh you must speak softly with mild words.”

*“If you put water into boiling oil, you will destroy the trivet and the kettle ...”*³⁸

Allah the Almighty states this reality in the following verse:

فِيمَا رَحْمَةٌ مِّنَ اللَّهِ لَنْتَ لَهُمْ وَلَوْ كُنْتَ فَطَّا
 عَلَيْهِ الْقَلْبُ لَا نَفْضُوا مِنْ حَوْلِكَ
 فَاعْفُ عَنْهُمْ وَاسْتَغْفِرْ لَهُمْ

38. Vol. IV, verses 3815-16

“Thus it is due to mercy from Allah that you deal with them gently, and had you been rough, hard hearted, they would certainly have dispersed from around you; pardon them therefore and ask pardon for them, and take counsel with them in the affair; so when you have decided, then place your trust in Allah; surely Allah loves those who trust.” (3; 159)

This approach is required not just towards unbelievers or sinners but it is also essential in approaching those Muslims who live according to Islam but sometimes make mistakes. Harsh talks and breaking hearts would produce results contrary to the expected, because people could be intolerant even towards their own parents. In such situations even telling the truth might make a blade effect and lose its value and attractiveness. Rumi states:

“When your father scolds you for your faults, even he looks to you like an attacking and ferocious beast...”

“This is the effect of your father’s cruelty and reprimand. In other words even though your father’s warning is for your own benefit, its cruelty and reproach make your father’s mercy and compassion looked like a beast to you.”

We should remember this side of human psychology and no matter how deep he sinks into sins, we should approach him/her bearing his/her value in essence in mind. That is why the Prophet (pbuh) said:

“For a Muslim, it is enough as a sin that he should look down upon his brother.” (Muslim, Kitab al-Birr, 32)



*A real
believer
regards a
sinner like a
bird with a
broken wing,
which needs
attention and
compassion.
He feels the
weight of
appeasing
and healing
the sinner’s
soul in crisis.*



“Except him who repents and believes and does a good deed; so these are they of whom Allah changes the evil deeds to good ones; and Allah is Forgiving, Merciful.”
(Qur'an 25; 70)

Bezmiâlem Vâlide Sultan's endowment in Damascus to compensate the damages caused by the servants is a nice reflection of this Prophetic saying in the history of Islam. A believer who is conscious of this delicate manner should **“direct questioning to himself and tolerance to others.”** For Allah the Almighty expresses:

“O you who believe! avoid most of suspicion, for surely suspicion in some cases is a sin, and do not spy nor let some of you backbite others. Does one of you like to eat the flesh of his dead brother? But you abhor it; and be careful of (your duty to) Allah, surely Allah is Oft-returning (to mercy), Merciful.” (49; 12)

In a Prophetic saying, it is stated that:

“A believer cannot be a person who slanders, curses and displays obnoxious behavior towards others.” (Tirmidhi, Kitab al-Birr, 48)

Ideal Muslims who follow these principles in their lives become heroic figures of Islamic ethics and merits. Even if the Messenger of Allah (pbuh) knew that someone had committed a sin, he would not tell his name openly to warn the others. Instead he used to say:

*“What is it that I saw you doing such and such...”*³⁹ in this way he was attributing himself that he had seen wrong.

This manner of not hurting the feelings of the faulty and not looking down upon them is the common characteristic of those who understand

39. See Bukhari, Manakib, 25; Muslim, Kitab al-salat, 119.

Sufism well; because the path to Allah is not through breaking hearts, but appeasing them. Yunus Emre expresses this clearly in the following lines:

*Heart is the throne of Allah
Allah looks into the heart
Miserable of the two worlds
The one who breaks a heart*

As a matter of fact several souls who had been lost because of banishment and harsh treatment have been saved by the blessing of this way of thinking.

According to a narration Junayd al-Baghdadi had a disciple. One day the disciple got caught committing a sin. He became so ashamed that he left the convent and did not come back. After a while, Junayd al-Baghdadi ran into him while walking in the market. When the disciple saw his teacher, he felt ashamed and walked quickly away. Junayd (may Allah bless his soul) turned to the people with him and said:

“You should go, I have a bird escaped from home” then he went after his disciple. When the disciple recognized his teacher was following, he started to walk faster. But he hastily went into a dead end and accidentally hit his head. When he saw his teacher before him, he shyly lowered his head. Junayd (may Allah bless his soul) said:

“O My son! Where are you going? From whom are you running away? A teacher should help his disciple especially in such difficult times.” Then he took his disciple to the convent. The disciple asked his teacher’s forgiveness and repented. This state



*“Because
moon
was not
frightened
and did
not escape
from the
darkness,
it got
brightened
up and the
rose got
its sweet
scent for it
got on well
with the
prickles.”*
Jalal al-Din Rumi



is one of the blessed results of spiritual maturity in guiding people to the true path of Islam.

On the other hand being able to go beyond forgiving the faults and reciprocate evil with goodness and even being able to pray for guidance and amelioration of someone who had done harm should be the distinctive characteristic of a Muslim. Instead of cursing, the Prophet's (pbuh) prayer for the guidance of the people of Taif who threw stones at him is enough as an example of this lofty characteristic. Again the Prophet's (pbuh) prayer for the goodness of the people of Mecca caused numerous unbelievers to find the right path.

In a saying of the Prophet (pbuh), it is stated that:

"It is not a merit to respond with goodness to someone who had done goodness and respond with harm to someone who had done misdoing. The real virtue is to respond with goodness to someone who had done harm to you." (Tirmidhi, *Kitab al-Birr*, 63)

"Do not forget two things: Allah the Almighty and death. Forget about two things: Your favors to others and other's misdeed towards you."
Lokman Hakim

Because if the person who has been responded with goodness was an enemy, he becomes a friend; if he was in the middle, he comes closer and his love intensifies. This is the reason why contemporary people, who are in spiritual crisis under the ruthless sovereignty of materialism, incline towards mystical trendstherefore using the methods of Sufism in delivering the message of Islam is bound to be successful. Today most of the Western people who have chosen Islam appeal to the works of great Sufis, such as Mawlana Jalal al-Din Rumi and Ibn Arabi. In other words, books related to Sufism are the most

read books about Islam in the West. We strongly need an all-embracing heart as described in the following lines of Rumi:

*“Come, come whatever you are,
It does not matter whether you are an infidel, an idolater or a fire-worshiper,
Come, our convent is not a place of despair.
Come, even if you violated your swear A hundred times,
Come again.”*

In such a tolerant invitation, Rumi's aim was to introduce humans with their Divine essence and to honor them with Islam by saving them from their faults. Otherwise his invitation does not mean to accept people in Islam without changing their old life styles. The object is to fix a person's spiritual world. If something is broken, then it needs to be taken to a repairman. Sufi teachers' hearts are similar to a repair shop, where they help people fix their previous mistakes. So it is normal that Rumi directs his invitation to people who had made some mistakes.

It is necessary to approach people with altruism, mercy and tolerance especially during times when religious feelings have weakened and people are committing sins left and right, without feeling any remorse. This approach would increase the possibility of saving them.

However, we should mention that tolerance to the sinner is restricted to personal matters. Otherwise



*“Listen to this truth from the rose. Hear what it says:
Why should I feel sad,
why should I let myself down for being with the prickle;
I attained my ability to smile for enduring my together-ness with the prickle, and because of enduring it, I got the capability to disperse beauty and emit sweet scent to the world.”*

Jalal al-Din Rumi



“Except him who repents and believes and does a good deed; so these are they of whom Allah changes the evil deeds to good ones; and Allah is Forgiving, Merciful.”
(Qur'an 25: 70)

faults and oppressions violating the rights of others and subverting the peace and tranquility of the society cannot be forgiven and tolerated. In addition, it is also understandable that those who superficially live Islam would get upset when they see someone committing a sin. For them, it is necessary to stay away from sins and the sinners to protect themselves from their harmful effects; because sins, like a nice piece of music, can easily attract those who live their lives in heedlessness. That is why to underestimate the sins of a sinner is very dangerous for the society, for it may lead to disdain Divine regulations and it may also cause the hearts to be infected with them. In other words, tolerance should be for the sinner not for the sins; and the enmity should be for the sins not for the sinners.

Above all, we can conclude this section with the following saying of our beloved Prophet (pbuh):

“Facilitate things to people (concerning religious matters), and do not make it hard for them and give them good tidings and do not make them run away (from Islam).” (Bukhari, Kitab al-'Ilm, 11)

Dear Lord! Bless us by filling our days with wisdom and making us real lovers! Enlighten us with the secrets of two worlds! Make our hearts a source of mercy for all creation for the sake of their Creator! Exchange our faults and sins with rewards and goodness!

Amin!

Manners and rules of conduct in serving creation

“Both services of the lovers and the reward for their services is Allah the Almighty, or His pleasure, blessings and favors”

Mawlana Jalal al-Din Rumi

Serving creation is a social duty, which is asked by Allah the Almighty from His servants. A believer's life becomes blessed and gains meaning and depth by serving creation. Service, which constitutes the greater part of Islamic ethics, means searching for Allah the Almighty and His pleasure through freeing the self from selfish thoughts and turning towards creation with an altruistic soul. All acts of services, which are away from egoistic thoughts of getting a worldly benefit and performed just for the sake of Allah the Almighty, are practical reflections of the quest and the ardent desire to unite with the Lord.

Therefore all service must be performed in a perfect manner and quality, and this can be realized by following some rules of conduct. In other words effort in performing both material and spiritual services is significant; it is also very significant that they were performed under what spiritual quality and state, because blessings of an act of service and its acceptance by Allah the Almighty depend on them. That is why Sufis expressed the importance of following specified manners and methods in service by saying:

“Serving creation is important but etiquette in service is more important.”



*“...and
whoever
keeps a soul
alive, it is
as though he
kept alive
all men;...”*
(Qur'an 5: 32)



Because, Allah the Almighty looks not only at how sincerely we have done something but also how much we have observed the measures of piety. That is why a materially poor but sincerely generous believer may gain the blessings of Paradise just by giving half a date, however a believer who is materially rich but spiritually poor, that is heedless and sick in the heart can be greatly disappointed in the Hereafter even though he spends all his wealth in charity.

Therefore acceptance of our worships by Allah the Almighty depends on the level of our love and sincerity of our hearts. Many externally great religious deeds shrink to the level of naught in a small heart, while many outwardly small and simple deeds can be means of lofty rewards and eternal gains in a sincere heart.

Then the most important issue is the emotional state of our hearts or the conducts and principles followed by our hearts in our worships. This principle gains more significance in the case of serving creation. In fact the Prophet (pbuh) is ordered to pray in the Quba Mosque, which was sincerely and piously built, and to demolish the mosque of Dirar built by hypocrites on the foundations of instigation. When we look at them, we see that both of them are externally mosques, but if we look at them internally, there is such a huge difference between them like East and West or Heaven and Hell. This is the difference between services performed according to Islamically specified manners and services performed without observing them.

"For a Muslim, it is enough as a sin that he should look down upon his brother."
(Muslim, Kitab al-Birr, 32)

Then it is necessary to have knowledge, suitability, dignity, a strong character and personality. It is useless to expect to gain blessings and favorable benefits from insincere and heedless services.

A man of service should not be an arrogant person. On the contrary, for the salvation of the souls, he should be a devoted Muslim, who is ready to spend not just his wealth, time, pride and fame but also all his possessions. A real man of service gets into the habit of being in the vicinity of all kinds of misery and sorrow, near hopelessness. He/she performs his responsibilities with love; he/she is a person of soul, source of hope and faith.

We can enumerate the qualities and rules of conduct as follows:

1. To realize the importance of service:

First of all, a man of service should realize and accept the first principle of service, that service is a great blessing as well as a treasure. He should also know that continuance of blessings depends on being thankful to his/her Lord.

The loftiest one of the services is *i'la Kalimat Allah* or exalting the word of Allah⁴⁰. This is a great cause and sacred duty entrusted to the faithful. The Holy Qur'an and Prophetic tradition are the trusts of Allah the Almighty and His Messenger to us. However the Companions of the Prophet and our pious predecessors carried this trust for more than

40. *Ila Kalimat Allah*: means to exalt the name of Allah and to convey the message of Islam summarized in *Kalimat al-Tawhid* or the declaration of God's unity.



"A believer cannot be a person who slanders, curses and displays obnoxious behavior towards others."
(Tirmidhi, Kitab al-Birr, 48)



"It is not a merit to respond with goodness to someone who had done goodness and respond with harm to someone who had done misdoing. The real virtue is to respond with goodness to someone who had done harm to you."
 (Tirmidhi, Kitab al-Birr, 63)

1400 years; we are obliged to do the same for the future generations. These services will hopefully be our principal in the Hereafter and our visas to Paradise.

My father Musa Topbas (q.s.), who devoted himself to serving creation, had expressed the significance and value of service as follows:

"One who is faithful should do his best in sincerely performing good deeds regardless of their magnitude; because many doers of good deeds neglect small ones. Whereas it is not known which one attracts the blessings and pleasure of Allah the Almighty."

It should be realized that opportunity to serve others does not fall everybody's share. There are many people who have the ability to do good deeds but because of inconvenience of time and place they cannot serve others. Those who serve should accept service as a blessing from Allah; increase their modesty and they should even thank to those whom they serve for being a means to this blessing."

Imam Rabbani expresses the importance and necessity of being grateful to those who are served:

"How a person can be the cause for the perfection of many others, many people, too, can be the cause for the perfection of one. Although a spiritual guide leads his disciples to the perfection, they certainly become the cause of the perfection of their teacher by mutual reflection."

We should be aware of the blessings of Allah the Almighty upon us and endeavor to spend them in His path. This is the sign of our loyalty in faith. In fact this is stated in the following verse:

“The believers are only those who believe in Allah and His Messenger then they doubt not and struggle hard with their wealth and their lives in the way of Allah; they are the truthful ones.” (49; 15)

On the other hand, the limits of obligatory almsgiving from property are stated in the sources of Islam. In this way, a person who pays his alms performs his responsibility required to be performed according to his wealth. However, since it is impossible to determine the minimum limits of other capabilities given by Allah the Almighty, we should devote ourselves to work in the path of Allah as much as we could until our last breath; although this is unknown to us, it is known to Allah the Almighty, which is why we must do our best in helping and serving others.

Our Lord states: **“Allah does not impose upon any soul a duty but to the extent of its ability;...”** (2; 286) That is why what is required from a believer is not to be satisfied with his services and to look continuously for new ways to do good deeds. One of the best examples of this way of life is the life of a Companion Abdullah b. Maktum (may Allah be pleased with him). Because he was blind, he was exempted from going to battles. However, he joined the army in the war of Qadisiyah thinking that he could hold the banner. This was the manifestation of his concern about determining the minimum level of service he must do for the blessings of Allah the Almighty.

A believer should never fall into dismay and heedlessness simply by thinking that he is weak or



“Facilitate things to people (concerning religious matters), and do not make it hard for them and give them good tidings and do not make them run away (from Islam).”
(Bukhari, Kitab al-'Ijm, 11)



incapable. He should never think that his services came to an end in the path of Allah. He shall live with the prolonged excitement of his good deeds until his very last breath.

In accordance with the following verse, every believer should know the requirement of serving others as long as he has the power to open and close his eyes.

وَاعْبُدْ رَبَّكَ حَتَّىٰ يَأْتِيَكَ الْيُقِينُ

“And serve your Lord until there comes to you that which is certain.” (15; 99)

The following incident displays the measures that we should follow in this matter.

Serving creation is a social duty, which is asked by Allah the Almighty from His servants. A believer's life becomes blessed and gains meaning and depth by serving creation.

After the battle of Uhud, the Prophet (pbuh) ordered the martyrs and the wounded to be checked. He was especially concerned with the state of Sa'd b. Rabi' (may Allah be pleased with him). The Messenger of Allah sent a Companion to the battlefield to find him, but no matter how much he tried, he could find Sa'd (may Allah be pleased with him) and did not get any response for his calls. Finally with one last hope he called:

“O Sa'd! The Prophet sent me and asked me to find out if you are among the martyrs or wounded.”

Sa'd was living his final moments but when he heard the name of the Prophet, he gathered all his strength and said:

"I am now among the dead." The Companion run towards Sa'd, who had many sword wounds, and heard him faintly saying:

"By Allah, if you do not protect the Prophet (pbuh) from his enemies and let him get hurt as long as you have as much strength as to open your eyes, there will be no excuse to offer for you in the presence of Allah the Almighty."⁴¹ These were the last words of Sa'd (may Allah be pleased with him).

While Khalid b. Walid (may Allah be pleased with him) was at his final moments, he said:

"How sad it is for a warrior who fought all his life in the path of Allah to die in a bed like a weak person. Lift me up and let me die at least leaning against my sword." These words reveal his deep awareness of his responsibility towards Islam.

We can expand this sentiment to all fields of service in the path of Allah. Every believer who is dedicated to serving creation must take a share from these sentiments and make it his life's ideal measure. He should realize the enormity of his responsibility and consequences if he stops serving Islam as long as he has the strength to serve.

The prophets and friends of Allah achieved such merit by serving creation even when they were sick and on their deathbeds. Only the wise can use this as an example to understand the significance in serving humanity.

41. See Ibn Abd al-Barr, *Isti'ab*, II, p. 590.



"There are many people who have the ability to do good deeds but because of inconvenience of time and place they cannot serve others. Those who serve should accept service as a blessing from Allah; increase their modesty and they should even thank to those whom they serve for being a means to this blessing."

Musa Topbas (q.s.)



“One who is faithful should do his best in sincerely performing good deeds regardless of their magnitude; because many doers of good deeds neglect small ones. Whereas it is not known which one attracts the blessings and pleasure of Allah the Almighty.”

Musa Topbas (q.s.)

2. To adorn the heart with spiritual qualities:

The hearts of those who serve humanity must be filled with spirituality and enlightenment. Our souls' prosperity is only achievable with spiritual nourishment. As a result of this maturity, our understanding, astuteness and feelings deepen. If Bahauddin Naqshiband, Aziz Mahmud Hudayi, Ghazali, Mawlana Jalal al-Din Rumi and other friends of Allah did not add spiritual understanding to their external knowledge, they would not attain such high levels in the heavens of our hearts like the star of Surayya.

Because these great friends of Allah observed all worldly matters from the windows of their hearts with the eyes of love, they became guides for their own society and all those who sought guidance. Even the Sultans who uncovered the secrets of science, reason and logic were honored with manifestations of Divine love. In fact, these revelations helped them achieve Divine love.

Even though bodies of these friends of Allah are under the earth for hundreds of years, their spiritual and saintly works have survived, and they will continue to be alive with these works, and services to humanity.

One of the most important objects of service is to guide people to the true path of Islam, and how this object actualizes depends upon the spiritual state of the spiritual guides. The more we practice Islam in our lives, the more we can influence the people around us. The heart is a window that opens to Divine secrets. For those who use this window

wisely, eternity will become evident. Entering into the framework of Divine Unity makes the servant a traveler of eternity.

When we examine the life of our beloved Prophet (pbuh), we recognize that Divine revelation was first revealed into his heart. This is explained in a verse as follows:

“And most surely this is a revelation from the Lord of the worlds. The Faithful Spirit has descended with it, Upon your heart that you may be of the warners In plain Arabic language.” (26; 192-95)

This Qur'an revealed into his (pbuh) heart conduced to his character and behavior to be a live reflection of the Qur'an. The Companions admired this reflection in his character and personality and they got their own Muslim character and personality from the heart of the Prophet (pbuh). Those blessed people, who had lived a barbaric life before the accepting Islam, achieved perfection in their conduct after the enlightenment through the prophetic heart. Thus they became “the peak figures of virtue” in history. Believers who aim to serve the way to Allah the Almighty should imitate the lives of the Companions, get their shares from this lofty secret and try to fill their hearts with Qur'anic *fayd* or spiritual power.

Serving others without an enlightened soul is like pouring a bucket of water in a desert. A seed planted in dry land is doomed to be nourishment for a field mouse. That is why men of service should be careful about their spiritual nourishment. They should pay attention to spirituality in their worship;



“The believers are only those who believe in Allah and His Messenger then they doubt not and struggle hard with their wealth and their lives in the way of Allah; they are the truthful ones.”
(Qur'an 49; 15)



“By Allah, if you do not protect the Prophet (pbuh) from his enemies and let him get hurt as long as you have as much strength as to open your eyes, there will be no excuse to offer for you in the presence of Allah the Almighty.”
Sa'd b. Rabi' (r.a.)

and to altruism, grace and refinement in their manners and transactions. They must reach spiritual maturity. Achieving such a spiritual state will allow the servant to reach Divine love. The Messenger of Allah (pbuh) says:

“...Allah loves the servant who is God-fearing and rich in his heart and is hidden (from the view of people) and is busy with purifying his/her soul.” (Muslim, *Kitab al-Zuhd*, 11)

The hearts of those who serve others must be like a fertile piece of land. All kinds of living beings walk over it and leave their waste. But earth purifies all these wastes and then produces numerous kinds of plants to feed the creatures wandering over it. The heart of a man of service must be like the earth; all beauty and goodness in his/her heart must reflect in his/her actions and service. In order to attain this state, the following four principles must be observed:

a. Heart’s constantly being with Allah the Almighty:

It is stated in the Holy Qur'an that:

“Those who remember Allah standing and sitting and lying on their sides and reflect on the creation of the heavens and the earth: Our Lord! Thou hast not created this in vain! Glory be to Thee; save us then from the chastisement of the fire: Our Lord! surely whomsoever Thou makest enter the fire, him Thou hast indeed brought to disgrace, and there shall be no helpers for the unjust:” (3; 191-92)

“Those who believe and whose hearts are set at rest by the remembrance of Allah; now surely by Allah’s remembrance are the hearts set at rest..”
(13; 28)

Remembrance of Allah does not mean just to recite the word “Allah,” but to be in a state of “God-consciousness.” Hearts can only be satisfied in this way, as it is the only way to reach divine nirvana and closeness to Allah.

When *Maiyyat al-Ilahiyyah* (or consciousness of being always together with Allah) takes its place in the hearts of those who serve creation, all hardship will be easy for him/her and he/she will keenly do his/her service. Eagerly performed services will both be sagacious and give pleasure to its doer. It should be cleaned from the love of anything other than Allah and filled with Divine love. Ibn Arabi narrates the following Sacred Hadith in his *Mishkat al-Anwar*:

*“O Son of Adam! I created you for Myself and created the things for you. Do not destroy yourselves with the world which I created for you.”*⁴²

b. Heart’s being filled with love for Allah and His Messenger:

Love in giving service is the beginning of spiritual advancement. In fact this is the starting point of everything. The heart begins its spiritual progress and exhibits its beauties after reaching love in giving service.

42. *Mishkat al-Anwar – (Nurlar Hazinesi)*, p. 126-27.



“And most surely this is a revelation from the Lord of the worlds. The Faithful Spirit has descended with it, Upon your heart that you may be of the warners In plain Arabic language.”
(Qur’ān 26; 192-95)



Love for Allah and His messenger must be greater than love for anything else in our lives. It is stated in the following verses:

“...Those who believe love ALLAH the most...”
(2; 165)

“Say: If your fathers and your sons and your brethren and your mates and your kinsfolk and property which you have acquired, and the slackness of trade which you fear and dwellings which you like, are dearer to you than Allah and His Messenger and striving in His way, then wait till Allah brings about His command: and Allah does not guide the transgressing people..” (9; 24)

If a heart is filled with love for Allah and His messenger, then all beauties will reflect in our soul. Allah and His messenger cannot be learned from the books but they can be known through the love in the hearts. The lover admires and imitates the beloved to the extent of his/her love; because love is like an electric line between two hearts. The beloved never escapes the lover's heart, and the lover's mind is constantly occupied with the beloved. They generously spend everything they own, even their lives for the sake of the beloved. So, in order for us to love the Messenger of Allah (pbuh) and to be worth of his love, we must always continue to send blessings (*Salawat*) for our hearts to be tied.

The more a heart gets reflection from the Messenger of Allah, the more it attains perfection. In a verse Allah the Almighty praises His messenger and says:

“How sad it is for a warrior who fought all his life in the path of Allah to die in a bed like a weak person. Lift me up and let me die at least leaning against my sword.”
Khalid b. Walid (r.a.)

إِنَّ اللَّهَ وَمَلِئَكَهُ يُصَلُّونَ عَلَى النَّبِيِّ يَا أَيُّهَا^١
 الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا صَلُّوا عَلَيْهِ وَسَلِّمُوا تَسْلِيمًا



“Surely Allah and His angels bless the Prophet; O you who believe! call for (Divine) blessings on him and salute him with a (becoming) salutation..”

(33; 56)

In another verse it is stated that:

“Certainly you have in the Messenger of Allah an excellent exemplar for him who hopes in Allah and the latter day and remembers Allah much.” (33; 21)

We observe the peak manifestation of these two verses in the lives of the Companions. Those who reached the source of love in Allah and His messenger will live as the eminent members of Muslim society until the day of Judgment and will be remembered with prayers and mercy. Two of the numerous examples of the lovers of the Messenger of Allah are as follows:

The Messenger of Allah (pbuh) used to send teachers to the tribes around Madinah to convey the message of Islam. However, some of the teachers were betrayed by the tribe members. One of these incidents called the “Raji’ incident” and took place in Raji’.

Some tribesmen from Adal and Qara went to Madinah and requested the Prophet (pbuh) to send some teachers with them who could educate their fellow tribesmen about Islam. The request

“...Allah loves the servant who is God-fearing and rich in his heart and is hidden (from the view of people) and is busy with purifying his/her soul.”
 (Muslim, Kitab al-Zuhd, 11)



196. The hearts of those who serve others must be like a fertile piece of land. All kinds of living beings walk over it and leave their waste. But earth purifies all these wastes and then produces numerous kinds of plants to feed the creatures wandering over it.

was granted and about ten Companions were sent with them. When the group reached Raji' they were entrapped by two hundred armed men waiting for them. Khubaib and Zaid bin Adathna (may Allah be pleased with them) were captured alive, while the others were martyred. Then they were sold to Meccan idolaters.

Later both of them were martyred. While facing death, Zayd (may Allah be pleased with them) was asked:

“Don’t you wish that you were spared and Muhammad (pbuh) got this punishment instead? Would not you like that you were resting comfortably in your home, while he was killed in your place?”

Zayd (may Allah be pleased with him) looked pityingly at Abu Sufyan and replied:

“By Allah, I could not be happy that a thorn should prick the foot of Muhammad (pbuh) at the cost that I rest in my home with my family.”

Abu Sufyan was astonished with this response and remarked to his associates: “See, the love of the Companions for Muhammad (pbuh) is unparalleled and unprecedented. I never saw anyone who likes his friends like Muhammad’s companions.”

Then they went to Khubaib (may Allah be pleased with him) and said that he would be freed if he renounced his religion. Both Khubaib and Zayd (may Allah be pleased with them) said: “Even if you had given us the entire world, we would not have given up our religion.”

Khubaib had one last wish before his martyrdom. He wanted to send his greetings to the Prophet (pbuh). But with whom could he send it? There was not any Muslim around. He raised his hands and started to pray:

"O Allah! There is nobody here to take my greetings to Your messenger (pbuh). Please You take my Salaams to him."

Just then the Prophet (pbuh) sitting with his Companions in Medina responded someone's greetings and said: "*wa alayhi al-Salaam* or Peace and greetings be upon him." The Companions were confused:

"O Messenger of Allah! to whose greetings did you respond?" The Prophet (pbuh) said:

"Your brother Hubaib's"

Finally infidels tortured and martyred both Companions. While facing death, Khubaib's following words were very enlightening:

"As long as I die in Islam, it does not matter how I die..."⁴³

Again because of their love for the Prophet (pbuh), the young Companions were racing to carry the Prophet's letters to the leaders of foreign countries. They volunteered for the job without producing any excuses. They passed high mountains, isolated deserts and all kinds of hardship and took Allah's messenger's letters to the leaders of the kingdoms around Arabia. Even in the face of death, they read

43. See Bukhari, *Maghazi*, 10; Waqidi, *Maghazi*, p. 280-81.



"Those who remember Allah standing and sitting and lying on their sides and reflect on the creation of the heavens and the earth:

Our Lord! Thou hast not created this in vain!

Glory be to Thee; save us then from the chastisement of the fire: Our Lord! surely whomsoever Thou makest enter the fire, him Thou hast indeed brought to disgrace, and there shall be no helpers for the unjust:"
(Qur'an 3: 191-92)



the Prophet's letters and manifested their infinite love for the Prophet (pbuh).

This was the level of the Companions' love and courage. While scenes from their lives shock us with awe, those lovers of Allah and His messenger never felt horrified. Adorning hearts with love for the Prophet will be a blessed fruit of sacred services.

c. Heart's being filled with love for Muslim brothers and sisters:

Wherever there is brotherhood, there exists mercy and compassion. If a believer does not ask whatever he/she asks for himself/herself, his faith would not be perfect. Allah the Almighty says:

إِنَّمَا الْمُؤْمِنُونَ إِخْوَةٌ فَأَصْلِحُوا بَيْنَ أَخْوَيْكُمْ
وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُرْحَمُونَ

“The believers are but brethren, therefore make peace between your brethren and be careful of (your duty to) Allah that mercy may be had on you.” (49; 10)

The Messenger of Allah states in one of his sayings:

“...those
who believe
are stronger
in love for
Allah...”
(Qur’ān 2; 165)

“You shall not enter Paradise so long as you do not affirm belief and you will not believe as long as you do not love one another. Should I not direct you to a thing which, if you do, will foster love amongst you: (i. e.) give currency to (the practice of paying salutation to one another by saying) *as-salamu alaikum*.” (Muslim, *Kitab al-Iman*, 93)

Again in another hadith, it was expressed:

"The Prophet said, "Allah will give shade, to seven, on the Day when there will be no shade but His. (These seven persons are) a just ruler, a youth who has been brought up in the worship of Allah (i.e. worships Allah sincerely from childhood), a man whose heart is attached to the mosques (i.e. to pray the compulsory prayers in the mosque in congregation), two persons who love each other only for Allah's sake and they meet and part in Allah's cause only, a man who refuses the call of a charming woman of noble birth for illicit intercourse with her and says: I am afraid of Allah, a man who gives charitable gifts so secretly that his left hand does not know what his right hand has given (i.e. nobody knows how much he has given in charity), and a person who remembers Allah in seclusion and his eyes are then flooded with tears." (Bukhari, Kitab al-Adhan, 36)

In a sacred Hadith, Allah the Almighty says:

"My Love is realized for those who love each other for Me; for those who give gifts to each other for Me; for those who trust each other and become friends for Me; for those who visit relatives and each other for Me." (Ahmad b. Hanbal, Musnad, V, 229)

Again the Messenger of Allah (pbuh) narrates the following story about brotherhood and love:

"A person visited his brother in another town and Allah deputed an Angel to wait for him on his way and when he came to him he said: Where do you intend to go? He said: I intend to go to my brother in this town. He said: Have you done any favour to him (the repayment of which you intend to get)? He said: No, excepting this that I love him for the sake of Allah, the Exalted and Glorious.



"Those who believe and whose hearts are set at rest by the remembrance of Allah; now surely by Allah's remembrance are the hearts set at rest.." (Qur'an 13; 28)



Thereupon he said: I am a messenger to you from, Allah: (to inform you) that Allah loves you as you love him (for His sake)" (Muslim, Kitab al-Birr, 46; Ahmad b. Hanbal, Musnad, II, 292)

If men of service love each other, it will increase their strength and will generate a blessed ground for their services because it will warm their hearts to each other. With love there exists no hardship which cannot be overcome. Allah the Almighty praises the believers who stand shoulder to shoulder and work together:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ الَّذِينَ يُقَاتِلُونَ فِي سَبِيلِهِ
صَفَّا كَانُهُمْ بُنَيَانٌ مَرْصُوصٌ

“Surely Allah loves those who fight in His way in ranks as if they were a firm and compact wall.”
(61; 4)

Love in giving service is the beginning of spiritual advancement. In fact this is the starting point of everything. The heart begins its spiritual progress and exhibits its beauties after reaching love in giving service.

History has witnessed the range of victories of the armies which stood together with love and faith. One of the recent manifestations of this is the Battle of Dardanelles. Our army which was materially weak but spiritually very strong won a historic victory. Even the enemy forced to admit that the Ottoman army had Divine help. In fact British general Hamilton said:

“We were defeated by spiritual power of the Turkish army not by its material strength. We saw some beings descending from the sky.”

This was the manifestation of the aforementioned verse; because for those soldiers martyrdom was the greatest happiness, and living as a veteran was an honor. Each one of them was like an entire nation. They encountered the enemy in the Battle of Dardanelles with the heart of the entire Muslim nation.

Allah the Almighty prohibits bad qualities like mocking, backbiting, nitpicking and suspicion because, they damage feelings of love and brotherhood among believers. Those who have these bad characteristics are warned in the Qur'an as follows:

“Woe to every slanderer, defamer, Who amasses wealth and considers it a provision (against mishap);” (104; 1-2)

Therefore those who hurt people spiritually and materiality with their hands, tongues will be punished in the pits of Hell. Islam encourages believing souls to protect themselves from such an end by being forgiving and merciful and by praying for each other's well-being. In fact the Messenger of Allah (pbuh) says:

“Avoid suspicion, for suspicion is the gravest lie in talk and do not be inquisitive about one another and do not spy upon one another and do not feel envy with the other, and nurse no malice, and nurse no aversion and hostility against one another. And be fellow-brothers and servants of Allah.” (Muslim, Kitab al-Birr, 30)

The prophet (pbuh) established an exemplary brotherhood among the Companions, which will light the believers' path until the last days. As a matter



“Certainly you have in the Messenger of Allah an excellent exemplar for him who hopes in Allah and the latter day and remembers Allah much.”
(Qur'an 33; 21)



of fact this brotherhood established between Meccan immigrants (*Muhajirun*) and Medinan helpers (*Ansar*) is an unparalleled historic scene. Medinan helpers presented all their wealth and shared all their possessions equally with their immigrant brothers. On the other hand Meccan immigrants showed no interest in their wealth and told them:

“My brother, I do not want your property. Just show me the way to the market; this is enough for me.” Their exemplary brotherhood is praised by Allah the Almighty and has the honor of being mentioned in the Qur'an:

“And those who made their abode in the city and in the faith before them love those who have fled to them, and do not find in their hearts a need of what they are given, and prefer (them) before themselves though poverty may afflict them, and whoever is preserved from the niggardliness of his soul, these it is that are the successful ones..” (59; 9)

The incident narrated by Hudayfa shows the Companions' altruism:

We were in the Battle of Yarmuk. The battle had just ended. I was walking over the battle-field among the martyred and injured with a pitcher of water. I was looking for the son of my uncle. I found him lying in a pool of blood on the burning sand. He was about to die. I asked him whether he wanted water. Unable to speak, he gestured that he did.

I was just offering it to him when Iktima's groaning was heard:

“Water! Water! Please, a drop of water!”

“As long as I die in Islam, it does not matter how I die...”

Khubaib (r.a.)

My uncle's son, whose name was Harith, heard that and gestured that I should take the water to him. I hastened to Ikrima. Ikrima had not yet taken the pitcher when a similar groaning was heard. Refusing to take the water, Ikrima wanted me to take it to the one groaning. When I got to that one, who was 'Iyash, he was supplicating:

"O Allah! We have never refrained from sacrificing our lives for the sake of our faith. Honor us with the rank of martyrdom, and forgive our sins!"

'Iyash saw the water but did not live long enough to drink it. He could only utter the profession of faith just before he died. I immediately returned to take the water to Ikrima. However, I found Ikrima also martyred. Then I hastened to Harith, my uncle's son. Unfortunately, he too was lying dead on the burning sand.⁴⁴

Hudhayfa (r.a.) expresses his emotional state as follows:

"This is the most touching event I have ever witnessed in my life. Even though they had no relationship, their altruism, kindness and compassion left deep traces in my mind. It was their unshakable belief in Islam which caused them to behave that way. It was Islam which created such degree of brotherhood among people."

Love is not just a claim. Love means to share your brothers' sorrow, to help them with their needs, to show self-sacrifice and to be able to share your belongings with them. Real brotherhood appears

44. See Hakim, *Mustadrak*, III, 270.



*"The
believers are
but brethren,
therefore
make peace
between
your
brethren and
be careful of
(your duty
to) Allah
that mercy
may be had
on you."
(Qur'ān 49: 10)*



"You shall not enter Paradise so long as you do not affirm belief and you will not believe as long as you do not love one another. Should I not direct you to a thing which, if you do, will foster love amongst you: (i. e.) give currency to (the practice of paying salutation to one another by saying) as-salamu alaikum."

(Muslim, Kitab al-Iman, 93)

during times of hardship. In a saying of the Prophet (pbuh) it is stated that:

"The similitude of believers in regard to mutual love, affection, fellow-feeling is that of one body; when any limb of it aches, the whole body aches, because of sleeplessness and fever." (Muslim, *Kitab al-Birr*, 66)

The Prophet (pbuh) was sometimes asking his Companions:

"O my friends! Did you caress an orphan's head today? Did you visit a sick person today? Did you attend a funeral today?" With these questions he was pointing out the importance of altruism and was directing his Companions to live not an individual but a social life.

In another Sacred Hadith, he was expressing that social services will be means for closeness to Allah the Almighty.

"Verily, Allah, the Exalted and Glorious, would say on the Day of Resurrection: O son of Adam, I was sick but you did not visit Me.

He would say: "O my Lord; how could I visit Thee whereas Thou art the Lord of the worlds?"

Thereupon He would say:

"Didn't you know that such and such servant of Mine was sick but you did not visit him and were you not aware of this that if you had visited him, you would have found Me by him?"

"O son of Adam, I asked food from you but you did not feed Me."

He would say: My Lord, how could I feed Thee whereas Thou art the Lord of the worlds?

He said: Didn't you know that such and such servant of Mine asked food from you but you did not feed him, and were you not aware that if you had fed him you would have found him by My side? (The Lord would again say):

O son of Adam,

I asked a drink from you but you did not provide Me. He would say: My Lord, how could I provide Thee whereas Thou art the Lord of the worlds? Thereupon He would say:

Such and such of servant of Mine asked you for a drink but you did not provide him, and had you provided him drink you would have found him near Me." (Muslim, Kitab al-Birr, 43)

The following verse about brotherhood and altruism is also very significant:

"And they give food out of love for Him to the poor and the orphan and the captive: We only feed you for Allah's sake; we desire from you neither reward nor thanks: Surely we fear from our Lord a stern, distressful day. Therefore Allah will guard them from the evil of that day and cause them to meet with ease and happiness;" (76; 8-11)

In conclusion, men of service should purify themselves from bad feelings such as grudge, jealousy and apathy and have their share from the maturing and blessed grounds of serving and loving others.



In a sacred Hadith, Allah the Almighty says: "My Love is realized for those who love each other for Me; for those who give gifts to each other for Me; for those who trust each other and become friends for Me; for those who visit relatives and each other for Me."
(Ahmad b. Hanbal, Musnad, V, 229)



d. Heart's being filled with love for creation for the sake of The Creator

When a heart is filled with spiritual light, bestowed by Allah the Almighty, a desire to help others naturally emerges in the heart. Those who place Allah and His Messenger's love in the center of friendship become friends with all of creation. Their hearts expand and become an all-embracing heart.

Service can only be performed with such an all-embracing heart and this type of heart can produce prosperous results. A seed which is planted with love becomes eternal. That is why we need to program our lives based on the principles shown by Allah the Almighty and His messenger (pbuh).

3 To maintain sincerity and *istiqāmah* or uprightness

Sincerity and uprightness must be the two inseparable characteristics of a man of service. To be a true man of service is a blessing of Allah the Almighty. We should be grateful for this blessing and try to be sincere and follow the straight path in our services. Otherwise we should not forget that we may lose this blessing.

Those who are entrusted with more important duties of serving others have to be really careful in this matter. It is necessary for someone who climbs a high mountain to be careful where to step up and which branch to hold on to, because a wrong step would be much more dangerous at the peak of a mountain.

“Surely Allah loves those who fight in His way in ranks as if they were a firm and compact wall.”
(Qur’ān 61; 4)

The saying of the Prophet (pbuh), “...*The sincere ones are against a great danger*” (Bayhaqi, *Shu'ab al-Iman*, V, 345), is a very nice expression of this reality. Those who sincerely serve others are under the protection of Allah the Almighty against the tricks and plots of the Devil. This is expressed in the following verses:

“He said: Then by Thy Might I will surely make them live an evil life, all, Except Thy servants from among them, the purified ones.” (38: 82-83)

Sincerity is the most important condition for the validity of serving others. Wherever there is sincerity, selfishness and desires wane. In this way claiming the success for his/herself will be blocked and obstacles on the path to service will decrease to a minimum.

One of the manifestations of sincerity can be observed in some types of charitable acts, especially in the foundation of endowments. Some endowments live for centuries because of the sincerity of its founder. Even though they sometimes temporarily stop their activities, in time some philanthropists come and revive them again.

We should never doubt that sincerity always prevails; because sincere attempts are protected and will never be wasted. Many a small army which was constituted from sincere and patient soldiers defeated a large army by Allah's will. This proves that sincerity is the foundation of victory. Victory after the Battle of Badr is the best example of this reality. On the other hand in the Battle of Hunayn, because the Muslim army trusted its number advantage and boasted, they lost their sincerity and experienced



Allah the Almighty prohibits bad qualities like mocking, backbiting, nitpicking and suspicion because, they damage feelings of love and brotherhood among believers.



“Avoid suspicion, for suspicion is the gravest lie in talk and do not be inquisitive about one another and do not spy upon one another and do not feel envy with the other, and nurse no malice, and nurse no aversion and hostility against one another. And be fellow-brothers and servants of Allah.”
(Muslim, Kitab al-Birr, 30)

a partial defeat at the beginning. However, later the Prophet (pbuh) warned his Companions and they realized their mistakes and were blessed with victory.

One of the most important signs of sincerity is to expect the reward for the service only from Allah the Almighty. The best examples of this were manifested by the prophets and men of Allah. The following statement mentioned in the Qur'an and uttered by almost all prophets expresses this fact in the clearest way:

وَمَا آسْأَلُكُمْ عَلَيْهِ مِنْ أَجْرٍ إِنْ أَجْرِيَ
 إِلَّا عَلَىٰ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ

“And I do not ask you any reward for it; my reward is only with the Lord of the worlds.”⁴⁵

Another significant example from the Qur'an is the story about **“Ashab Qaryah – The Companions of the village.”**

Three delegates were sent to Antioch to invite their people to the straight path, but the people not only refused their invitation but also threatened to kill them. When Habib al-Najjar from Antioch heard his peoples' rude behavior and threats, he hastily came to them and said:

“And from the remote part of the city there came a man running, he said: O my people! follow the messengers; Follow him who does not ask you

45. See Holy Qur'an 26; 109, 127, 145, 164, 180: 10; 72: 11; 29.

for reward, and they are the followers of the right course;” (36; 20-21)

If a man of service waits no worldly gain for his services but expects his reward only from Allah the Almighty, he would gain not just Allah’s but also people’s contentment. This reality is expressed in the following tradition of the Prophet (pbuh):

On one occasion a man came to the Messenger of Allah and said:

“O Messenger of Allah! Tell me something when I do it, I win both Allah’s and people’s love.” The Messenger of Allah replied:

“Renounce the world and do not love this world so that Allah would love you. Do not ask what people have so that people would love you, too.” (Ibn Majah, Zuhd, 1)

In short, the thought to do everything for the pleasure of Allah the Almighty must transform into consciousness in the hearts of the men of service.

Those who serve others must follow the path of the Prophets, *siddiqs* or the eminently truthful, the martyrs, and the righteous, in other words the straight path. Those who follow the straight path in faith, in speech, in action, in every step of life are praised in the following verse:

“(As for) those who say: Our Lord is Allah, then continue in the right way, the angels descend upon them, saying: Fear not, nor be grieved, and receive good news of the garden which you were promised.” (41; 30)



Love is not just a claim. Love means to share your brothers' sorrow, to help them with their needs, to show self-sacrifice and to be able to share your belongings with them. Real brotherhood appears during times of hardship.



Sincerity and uprightness must be the two inseparable characteristics of a man of service. To be a true man of service is a blessing of Allah the Almighty. We should be grateful for this blessing and try to be sincere and follow the straight path in our services. Otherwise we should not forget that we may lose this blessing.

Men of service should display a strong character; because humans admire and follow exemplary figures who have strong character and dignity. There are many examples of these types of people in history of Islam.

In fact during the Abbasid caliphate, borders of the Muslim state were expanded and nation's wealth was flowing into the capital Baghdad. As a result, the number of those who were deceived by wealth and fell into fun, pleasure and luxury rose significantly. In fact head vizier Hasan b. Sahl's wedding ceremony, who got married with Caliph Ma'mun's daughter, continued for nineteen days and luxury and extravagance was at the highest level. State treasury had been wasted. State's wealth enslaved the souls' of many high ranking statesmen. Such weak characters could not present any good example for others to follow, and they did not have any charitable reminder or trace after their death.

On the other hand at the same time there were others in Baghdad who invite people to purify their souls, to obey Allah and His messenger. These friends of Allah, such as Abdullah b. Mubarak, Sufyan al-Sawri, Fudayl b. Iyad, Junayd al-Baghdadi, Ma'ruf al-Karkhi, and Bishr al-Khafi, devoted themselves to Allah and were living a pious life. Worldly possessions and luxury could not buy their souls; no government posts or worldly glamour could turn them from their objects and blessed duties. They were like a safe harbor and a shelter for those who were about to drown in the sea of materialism. Sultans, viziers,

statesmen were ruling over the physical existence of the people while friends of Allah were crowned in the hearts of people. They were serving people without expecting any worldly benefit from them. Their spiritual state was even affecting the non-Muslims.

Abbasid Caliph Harun al-Rashid was living in glory and luxury in Raqqa. One day Abdullah b. Mubarak came to Raqqa. All the people of the city went out of the city to welcome him. Caliph was almost alone in the city. One of the concubines of Caliph wondered the reason of this scene and asked:

“What is this? What is happening?” and she was told:

“A scholar from Khorasan came to the city. His name is Abdullah b. Mubarak. People went out to welcome him.”

Then the concubine said:

“The real sultanate is this one not Harun al-Rashid’s; because, without a police force he cannot even gather his workers.”

As a matter of fact, throughout history the righteous men kept the community’s spirit alive and hold the honor and dignity of Islam up with their high character and personality. In return for their high morality Our Lord Almighty loved them and made them loved by all believers until the last days. In a verse, it is stated that:



“Renounce the world and do not love this world so that Allah would love you. Do not ask what people have so that people would love you, too.”
(Ibn Majah, Zuhd, 1)



إِنَّ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ
سَيَجْعَلُ لَهُمُ الرَّحْمَنُ وُدًّا

“Surely (as for) those who believe and do good deeds for them will Allah bring about love.” (19; 96)

Throughout history the righteous men kept the community's spirit alive and hold the honor and dignity of Islam up with their high character and personality. In return for their high morality Our Lord Almighty loved them and made them loved by all believers until the last days.

That is why men of service should follow the footsteps of the Prophet (pbuh), who was *al-amin* (trustworthy) and *al-Sadiq* (honest), and be honest and trustworthy. This can be achieved if the servant follows an upright conduct in his/her servitude to Allah the Almighty. They must be really careful in each of their steps like they are walking on the bridge of Sirat both in their personal life as well as in their service to others.

4 To be compassionate, merciful and forgiving

A perfect believer is a man of heart. Mercy and altruism are his most distinctive characteristics and essential nature. In a faithful heart, compassion is like a fire not to be extinguished. The road to mature faith goes through the steps of mercy and service. Mercy is a Divine essence which is the evidence for our faith in this world.

The men of service should contemplate Allah the Almighty's names *al Rahman* and *al Rahim* (The Most Gracious and Most Merciful) and base their conduct with regards to creation on mercy and compassion, because, service is a matter of mercy. All beauty can be achieved as a result of services performed with

mercy, compassion and modesty. The most apparent sign of mercy is giving in charity. That is why the men of service should also be generous; because high morals and characteristics complete each other. A merciful person is a generous one; a generous person is a modest one and a modest person becomes a real man of service. The messenger of Allah (pbuh) says:

“Allah the Almighty is the Most Generous and the Most Benevolent; He loves generosity and high morals...”
(Suyuti, *al-Jami’ al-Saghir*, 60)

On the other hand bad morals and characteristics are also connected. One who is devoid of mercy and compassion becomes stingy; a stingy person becomes arrogant, and arrogant person avoids serving others.

Therefore, we cannot expect any good results from service performed in a rude, harsh or offensive manner. This issue presents more significance in matters of education and teaching the message of Islam. The following verse addresses the entire Muslim nation:

فِيمَا رَحْمَةٌ مِّنَ اللَّهِ لِنَتَ لَهُمْ وَلَوْ كُنْتَ فَطَّا
غَلِيظَ الْقُلُوبِ لَا نَفْضُوا مِنْ حَوْلِكَ

“Thus it is due to mercy from Allah that you deal with them gently, and had you been rough, hard hearted, they would certainly have dispersed from around you; ...” (3; 159)



The men of service should contemplate Allah the Almighty's names al Rahman and al Rahim (The Most Gracious and Most Merciful) and base their conduct with regards to creation on mercy and compassion, because, service is a matter of mercy.



The men of service should also be generous; because high morals and characteristics complete each other. A merciful person is a generous one; a generous person is a modest one and a modest person becomes a real man of service.

Once the Messenger of Allah told A'isha (may Allah be pleased with her):

"O A'isha, verily Allah is kind and He loves kindness and confers upon kindness which he does not confer upon severity and does not confer upon anything else besides it (kindness)." (Muslim, Kitab al-Birr, 77)

Again in another tradition, the Prophet (pbuh) says:

"...Allah the Almighty loves every soul who teaches goodness to people who are sorrowful for their mistakes and merciful people and invites them to obey Allah the Almighty. He hates those hearts that are harsh, waste their time in vain, sleep whole night without knowing that whether their soul will be returned to them or not, and barely remember Allah." (Daylami, Musnad, I, 158)

Outward aspects of religion are learned by reason and the inward dimension or its essence is, on the other hand, learned with the heart. In educating and managing human affairs, mercy and love would produce better results, because many people who cannot be controlled by brute force can submit to mercy and love.

In fact love felt for a teacher increases the connection and affinity to him, since his approach to people with love and mercy makes his teachings to be learned by heart not by reason. In this way, inculcation takes a more appropriate form and influences the recipient's heart to the utmost level, which is why students especially must be approached with compassion and love, because humans submit

to mercy and love. Hence the real conquerors are the conquerors of hearts.

Because the selfish statesmen who lack mercy and love cannot control the hearts of those under their rule, they use force to ensure the obedience of the people. They try to spread their poison around, thus their success is limited to the physical realm only. Ultimately they are doomed to be drowned in the whirlpools of hate. To assign posts for these people is the real oppression upon the people.

In reality, oppression is the result of the absence of love and mercy. Those who lack these two lofty characteristics would always be inclined to oppression. Mercy is the fruit of love. Just like peace, tranquility and blessings cannot exist in families which are not founded on love, we cannot expect auspicious results from service which lacks love.

People who need our help and service are like wounded birds. What can benefit them are the services performed with compassion and love. We also need a special training to obtain these qualities. The essence of this training can be acquired by methods taught and observed in Sufism. In other words, it can be achieved through spiritual schooling.

The attributes in the heart of a man which represent “selfishness” and “assertion” must be replaced with love and mercy. Delicate flowers of the tree of mercy can only sprout by love. Those who have reached the perfection in mercy and love always look for creation in need in order to help; because, they feel their pain in their hearts.



“Allah the Almighty is the Most Generous and the Most Benevolent; He loves generosity and high morals...”
(Suyuti, al-Jami' al-Saghir, 60)



“Thus it is due to mercy from Allah that you deal with them gently, and had you been rough, hard hearted, they would certainly have dispersed from around you; ...”
(3: 159)

All institutions, especially those that offer spiritual education, have to be a school of mercy, altruism and service. Instead of giving empty chunks of knowledge inside their four walls, their training should concentrate on the love and excitement of serving others. Because an insensitive teacher who does not inoculate his students with love; an imam who does not make his congregation feel the rapture of faith and not let the innocent minds of his students feel the love for Qur'an; an employer who does not protect his employees and show them mercy are all the destitute of compassion who are removed from Divine mercy. Those who do not feel anything for the sick, disabled, poor and lonely people are the selfish ones who do not have any share from serving others.

It should not be forgotten that Allah the Almighty is with the oppressed and the downhearted. Those who escape from human justice with numerous tricks will, one day, despairingly face Divine justice of Allah the Almighty.

Efforts of arrogant educators of the Qur'an who sometimes act like a judge and sometimes like an executioner; who teaches Qur'an with the force of stick instead of love and mercy will just be vain tiredness.

All believers, especially those who have the responsibility to serve others, should remember the following warning of the Prophet (pbuh):

“Shall I tell you of the people of Hell? They are those who are violent, miserly, cruel and arrogant.” (Bukhari, Ayman, 9)

Just like scenes of rose and flowers make even the harshest man smile, man of service should have a nature of rose and should be able to soften the hardest hearts, and make the stern faces smile.

One of the names of Allah the Almighty, *al-Afuw* or the Most-forgiving, is about His forgiveness. Men of service should have the same forgiving nature.

In a verse it is stated:

“Take to forgiveness and enjoin good and turn aside from the ignorant.” (7; 199)

Forgiveness is the natural result of loving Allah and being adorned with His morals. Being able to look at creation through the eyes of the Creator prepares the ground for forgiveness. Forgiveness emerges from the heart. Those who want to excel in Divine love are the ones who radiate forgiveness from their hearts, because through forgiving others we can deserve our own forgiveness. People who cannot forgive in reality prepare their own destruction.

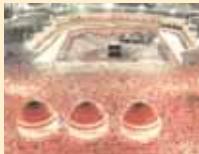
Forgiveness means to be able to pardon a faulty person when having the power to punish him. The real merit is to suppress the anger of the self and prefer forgiveness. General amnesty issued on the day of Mecca’s conquest by the Prophet (pbuh) is the best example of this manner.

Men of service should not search people’s faults but conceal them. In fact the Messenger of Allah (pbuh) says:

“Whoever covers (the fault of) a Muslim, Allah will cover his sins on the day of resurrection; and whoever



People who need our help and service are like wounded birds. What can benefit them are the services performed with compassion and love. We also need a special training to obtain these qualities. The essence of this training can be acquired by methods taught and observed in Sufism. In other words, it can be achieved through spiritual schooling.



Consultation about their important matters is a characteristic of believers as described by the given verse: "who (conduct) their affairs by mutual Consultation" (42; 38)

reveals (the fault of) a Muslim, Allah will reveal his faults and disgraces him even he is in his home." (Ibn Majah, Hudud, 5)

"Whoever criticizes his Muslim brother for a deficiency will not die unless he gets afflicted with the same deficiency." (Tirmidhi, Qiyamah, 53)

5 To act with consultation

Acting with consultation is a Divine command and a very significant Sunnah of the Prophet (pbuh). Allah the Almighty reveals the significance of consultation to the Believers through His Messenger's personality:

"Thus it is due to mercy from Allah that you deal with them gently, and had you been rough, hard hearted, they would certainly have dispersed from around you; pardon them therefore and ask pardon for them, and take counsel with them in the affair; so when you have decided, then place your trust in Allah; surely Allah loves those who trust." (3; 159)

Consultation about their important matters is a characteristic of believers as described by the given verse: **"who (conduct) their affairs by mutual Consultation"** (42; 38)

The Messenger of Allah used to consult his Companions about the important matters of Muslim community. Even though he was supported by Divine revelation, he preferred to act with consultation to be an example for the Muslims. In fact in the Battles of Badr and Handaq (Trench), he (pbuh) consulted

his Companions about where and how the Muslim army should fight. Again in the Battle of Uhud he followed his Companions' idea and met the enemy outside of Madinah, even though his view was to have a defensive war at home.

Human beings are under the influence of their feelings, and they think and make their decisions according to them. That is why acting with consultation provides more accurate and blessed services; however, it is an important principle to choose the people to whom we consult from intelligent, knowledgeable, easygoing, and pious believers. It is an obvious fact that the decision made by a group would be more accurate than the decision of an individual. The Prophet (pbuh) expressed this fact as follows:

“Those who made istikhara (seek guidance from Allah for the right decision through a dream) would not be disappointed; those who consult would not regret afterwards and those who cut down expenses would not become poor.” (Haythami, *Majma' al-Zawaaid*, II, 280)

Consultation also reveals that we esteem the opinions of the persons we consult with, which would in turn, give them energy and enable them to serve more eagerly. On the other hand, it decreases the egotism of the men of service to a minimum and protects them from the dangers of pride. Not to deign to appeal to consultation are signs of pride, arrogance, and considering yourself better than others.

The result of consultation must certainly be applied. Insincere consultations which are performed



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as a habit do more harm than good. Consultation must be done with skilled and qualified people and everybody should be able to tell their opinion so that truth and blessings would be realized. If the person consulted with is not qualified, then the result will be full of errors and inexact. We should not allow mistakes to happen in a similar manner of the oddity of consulting a lawyer about a matter of medicine.

The consulted person should not only be qualified in the consulted matter, but must also be a man of good morality and free from prejudices. Otherwise there is a possibility to mislead the advised, which produces counter effects. On the other hand, we should avoid any bias and misconceptions, and impartially listen to the person who seeks our advice.

A man of service should prefer his brothers' pleasure over his own pleasure. Those who insist on doing everything alone become tired and bored, and easily adapt their minds towards negativity. They begin to belittle those around them and become enslaved by their love of power. The Messenger of Allah (pbuh) says about those kinds of people:

“Allah the Almighty revealed to me that we should be humble amongst ourselves and none should show pride upon the others...” (Muslim, *Jannah*, 64)

In this respect a real and mature man of service considers himself the last man in the line of service by getting rid of his egotism.

6 To know the characteristics of the person to be served

Human beings, the most respected creation, should be treated with esteem and respect, because his heart is the place of Divine manifestations. That is why it is a central principle for the result of the service to be very sensitive in serving others. Performing a service with harsh and offending manners causes the doer to lose his rewards. On the contrary, it may even be considered a sin. Fixing a broken heart cannot compare to repairing a shoe. Even repairing a shoe is more difficult than breaking it. Hence, when a heart is broken, it would be really hard to fix.

It is stated in a saying of the sages:

Those who know themselves are of three groups:

- a. Those who are fascinated by Divine power and are careful not to hurt anything
- b. Those who are so modest and bashful that they cannot even pronounce the names of Allah
- c. Those who do not look down upon the servants of Allah, in other words, those who have immense humility and look at creation through the eyes of their Creator.

When it comes to serving others, knowing the person who will be served is as important as the service itself, for giving an appropriate service can only be performed by knowing the recipient. For instance, one cannot help someone who is too bashful to express his needs in the same way as one



“Allah the Almighty revealed to me that we should be humble amongst ourselves and none should show pride upon the others...”
(Muslim, Jannah, 64)



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 a. Those who are fascinated by Divine power and are careful not to hurt anything
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might help someone who does not at all hesitate to express his own needs..

A Muslim should behave wisely. A brother or a sister should know how to act, what to say, to whom to say certain things to, when, where and how to speak eloquently. Ja'far al-Tayyar's gentle manner (may Allah be pleased with him) in explaining Islam to the Abyssinian ruler is an exemplary one. When the Christian ruler of Abyssinia asked Ja'far al-Tayyar to recite parts from Qur'an, he chose parts about praising Jesus and Mary instead of reciting parts about challenging the unbelievers. The Abyssinian ruler, who was impressed by these verses, drew a line on the ground and said:

“The difference between your religion and mine is this much.” A while later he converted Islam.

Knowing and understanding the persons needing to be served is also important in appointing the best person to serve. In fact the Prophet (pbuh) did not send a Companion who was qualified to be an army commander as an ambassador. He also (pbuh) did not appoint Companions of suffah who were men of knowledge, mission and heart as army commanders. When he (pbuh) was entrusting affairs of the Muslim state to his Companions, he was taking their personal qualities and even their physical characteristics into consideration.

For their significance we would like to underscore some principles in human training and education.

The most difficult service is the education of human beings, because an uneducated self always directs the person to evil. Allah the Almighty placed the inclination of both sin and piety in human nature. From early childhood, manifestations of these two inclinations can be seen in human life. Happiness can be achieved by preventing the inclination towards sins and strengthening piety. The way to achieve this is through training. Even the most ferocious animals can be trained easier than human beings can be trained.

Giving education is the occupation of the prophets. In order to be an educator, feelings and emotions must be strong. Because when establishing connection with the students, their feelings must be understood, evaluated and then action must be based on the findings. This is similar to diagnosing an illness before undergoing the proper treatment. It should not be forgotten that human beings can be won over only if their problems are solved.

Just as the capabilities of Human beings vary, their weaknesses differ, too. That is why an educator must approach his students with the meticulousness of a psychologist. A word or certain behavior which is beneficial for someone can be harmful for others. Hence, it is vital that we know very well the people for whom we are responsible.

On the other hand, time and dosage of oral communication must be very well arranged. Just like we are careful when we bend a hard object, so not to break it, we should be careful of those who have strong selfish inclinations and capabilities,



The most difficult service is the education of human beings, because an uneducated self always directs the person to evil. Allah the Almighty placed the inclination of both sin and piety in human nature.



If you hastily pour water from a full pot into another pot that is the same size, some of that water will spill over. However if you follow the principle of gradualism and pour it little by little, you can transfer the water into the other without wasting any of it.

and therefore should not rush in saving them. The dosage has to be of the right amount. If you hastily pour water from a full pot into another pot that is the same size, some of that water will spill over. However if you follow the principle of gradualism and pour it little by little, you can transfer the water into the other without wasting any of it. The importance of the same principle of physics cannot be ignored in human training. In other words human training depends on patience and knowing the student's abilities very well.

An educator should know his students like the back of his hand and train them according to their capabilities. For instance, a student with a poetic capability must be directed into the depths of the human soul; a student with management capability, on the other hand, must be trained about human conduct, mercy, justice and how people can be directed. Other occupational abilities are like the abovementioned, each one of them needs to be treated differently.

Educational services must be carefully planned by taking into consideration the body-soul and reason-heart balance. If only human reason is addressed, love for benefit, office and other worldly gains increase and spiritual training gets neglected. A person who is trained with this method becomes a servant of wealth, fame and desires. However if his soul is educated together with his reason, only then his natural inclinations can be channeled into the right path. It should be known that knowledge that does not penetrate the heart cannot transform into spiritual insight. Knowledge without spiritual

insight might lead his owner astray. Those who are not adorned with spiritual sentiments and virtues will be left to the mercy of the brutal force of evil-commanding selves.



7 To maintain moderation

Like in every other duty, to observe moderation in services is a central principle. Just like a man of service cannot ignore his family, parents and his other responsibilities, he should not use his family and other responsibilities as an excuse to refrain from serving the creation of Allah the Almighty.

Allah the Almighty calls Muslims as middle nation in a verse:

“And thus We have made you a medium (just) nation...” (2: 143)

The Prophet (pbuh) states that:

“Best of the actions are the ones done moderately (the ones not going into two extremes)” (Bayhaqi, *Shu'ab al-Iman*, V, 261) and presents his ummah a perfect measure for their actions.

In another tradition he (pbuh) says:

“Whoever leads the people in prayer should shorten it because among them there are the sick, the weak, the old and the needy (having some jobs to do). Whoever prays alone may extend his/her prayer as much as he/she wants.” (Bukhari, *Kitab al-'Ilm*, 28)

As can be observed from the aforementioned texts, to maintain balance and moderation in both worldly and spiritual affairs is an exceptional prin-

**“And thus
We have
made you
a medium
(just)
nation...”**
(Qur'an 2: 143)



“Best of the actions are the ones done moderately (the ones not going into two extremes)”
 (Bayhaqi, Shu'ab al-Iman, V, 261)

ciple established by Allah and His messenger. When this principle is observed, both individual and social peace and tranquility will certainly be actualized. Therefore a man of service must be a moderate person. For instance a preacher should finish his sermon as soon as the athan starts, because people who have urgent things to do should be considered, and the congregation can peacefully start their prayer. Therefore men of service should be insightful and intelligent. They should not transgress the limits when they love, get angry, compliment, criticize, praise and decry. They should be sincere but not off-hand; and be dignified but not too proud, and be modest but not despicable.

Men of service should treat people under their management with compassion, justice, and mercy and should not assign them such heavy loads or tasks. It should be remembered that treatment with justice does not mean equal treatment, but to give everyone whatever their right is. It is stated in a verse that all unfair actions must be avoided:

“O you who believe! be maintainers of justice, bearers of witness of Allah's sake, though it may be against your own selves or (your) parents or near relatives; if he be rich or poor, Allah is nearer to them both in compassion; therefore do not follow (your)low desires, lest you deviate; and if you swerve or turn aside, then surely Allah is aware of what you do.” (4; 135)

Acting in moderation displays more significance in administrative offices. This also reveals the level of a person's insight and intelligence. When the gov-

ernor of Egypt, Amr b. al-As (may Allah be pleased with him) was asked about the cause of his success, he said:

"I imagine that there is a rope between me and each person around me. When this rope is tightened too much, I let it loose a little; when I feel it got too loose, I pull and tighten it. In this way I maintain my relationship with people around me with moderation."

Because, in the name of discipline, tormenting the people under command can never be excused. On the other hand, it is a fact that a lack of discipline results in anarchy. And this causes wasting wealth, time and service and wasting leads to disaster and collapse. The conqueror of Al-Andalus, Tariq b. Ziyad, was wearing old patched clothes when he entered Spain. However the bravery and victory in his heart and soul was dazzling. In the end this spiritual state of him was instrumental in founding a great civilization. However when Abdulah al-Saghir, the sultan of the last Muslim state, Almohads, in Andalusia was defeated and leaving his country, even his horse's saddle and spurs were made from gold. That means when moderation is lost after victory and worldly gains, there starts decline and defeat. In fact Abdulah al-Saghir stood on a hill and looked over Granada and he started to cry when he saw the city burning. His mother told him the following statement, which left a mark in history:

"Cry O heedless man cry! You could not defend this blessed country like a man; now cry like a woman..."



"Whoever leads the people in prayer should shorten it because among them there are the sick, the weak, the old and the needy (having some jobs to do). Whoever prays alone may extend his/her prayer as much as he/she wants."
(Bukhari, Kitab al-'Ilm, 28)



"I imagine that there is a rope between me and each person around me. When this rope is tightened too much, I let it loose a little; when I feel it got too loose, I pull and tighten it. In this way I maintain my relationship with people around me with moderation."

Amr b. al-As (r.a.)

Since then that hill has been called “the Arab’s last cry” or “hill of the Arab’s cry.”

Trusts which are not properly protected will be wasted; and wasted trusts will be lost. As a matter of fact after the collapse of Al-Andalus, not just lands of Spain but also many works of Muslim civilization and unfortunately one million of manuscripts were burned down.

Therefore a man of service should know how and where to use the things entrusted to him. However he protects his personal possessions from wasting, he also should avoid wasting public property, education and services.

We should not understand wasting as wasting property and possessions. We should apply Divine warning: **“Allah does not love the extravagant.”⁴⁶** into all aspects of our lives.

We must know that we will be held accountable for wasting our or another’s life and time. In this respect a teacher who knows the significance of his work should never waste his students’ time and energy. We should know that doing nothing and “killing time” is a kind of waste. Not to protect the lofty things entrusted unto us is also a great waste. And the greatest waste of all is forgetting that humans are the most honorable of all creation and therefore not giving them the proper education they deserve.

Therefore we should be very sensitive about the education and training of human beings. They should

46. Qur'an 6; 141

be trained with the ability to understand the book of the universe and to comprehend the delicate order and balance of the universe. Such an educational atmosphere will enable them to be perfect human beings, who can transform their faith into *ihsan* (to worship Allah as if seeing Him). In a way we should train individuals who have the same comprehension of faith as the Companions. Otherwise among so many billions of people the need for real human beings cannot be satisfied.

We must do our best to raise perfect human beings and to save as many children as we can from the fires of Hell they fell in. Who knows? Maybe the children whom we thrust our hand to save will be tomorrow's Sultan Mehmeds (the conqueror), Yavuzes, Solomons (the Magnificent), Sinans (the Architect), Piri Reises (famous captain), Ibn Kamals (Muslim scholar), Akşemseddins or Aziz Mahmud Hudayis (Sufi saints).

A nation becomes a great nation and maintains its vitality as much as it raises such geniuses. Even though the Ottoman emirate was the smallest emirate founded in Anatolia, it grew and became a great sycamore covering three continents as great as the figures it raised. However later it shrank and took its place in the pages of history in the hands of those statesmen who submitted themselves to personal gains, who loved their posts instead of the future of their people.

In respect to his duty, a real man of service is like a cashier distributing rights to the rightful people, because everything belongs to Allah the Almighty.



We should be very sensitive about the education and training of human beings. They should be trained with the ability to understand the book of the universe and to comprehend the delicate order and balance of the universe.



"And He it is Who produces gardens (of vine), trellised and untrellised, and palms and seed-produce of which the fruits are of various sorts, and olives and pomegranates, like and unlike; eat of its fruit when it bears fruit, and pay the due of it on the day of its reaping, and do not act extravagantly; surely He does not love the extravagant." (Qur'an 6; 141)

Everything bestowed upon us is His blessings, and we will be questioned for each one of these blessings. If we do not want the result of this questioning to be suffering, we need to listen to the following Divine warnings:

"And He it is Who produces gardens (of vine), trellised and untrellised, and palms and seed-produce of which the fruits are of various sorts, and olives and pomegranates, like and unlike; eat of its fruit when it bears fruit, and pay the due of it on the day of its reaping, and do not act extravagantly; surely He does not love the extravagant." (6; 141)

"O children of Adam! attend to your embellishments at every time of prayer, and eat and drink and be not extravagant; surely He does not love the extravagant.." (7; 31)

"Surely the squanderers are the fellows of the Shaitans and the Shaitan is ever ungrateful to his Lord." (17; 27)

Extravagance is improper and excessive spending for ourselves. However spending for sake of Allah is not considered waste. On the contrary, the more we spend the more we earn reward in the Divine Court. It is stated in a verse:

"They ask you about intoxicants and games of chance. Say: In both of them there is a great sin and means of profit for men, and their sin is greater than their profit. And they ask you as to what they should spend. Say: What you can spare. Thus does Allah make clear to you the communications, that you may ponder-" (2; 219)

In short, the best way in all these matters is to maintain moderation and balance, and to avoid wastefulness, which ultimately will keep us from fulfilling our spiritual and social responsibilities..

Anger is another factor that destroys moderation. It is a weakness and a mental imbalance. It is the expression of human weakness and incompetence. Therefore, men of service should be able to control their anger.

On one occasion the Prophet (pbuh) asked his Companions:

“Whom do you count as a wrestler amongst you? We said: He who wrestles with strong persons. He said: No, it is not he but one who controls himself when in a fit of rage.” (Muslim, *Kitab al-Birr*, 106)

In fact, usually the most erroneous decisions that results in disappointment are the ones made during times of anger. In respect to this fact, the Prophet (pbuh) says:

“...Do not judge between two persons when you are angry...” (Muslim, *Kitab al-Aqdiyah*, 16) He even advised three times to one of his Companions who had asked his advice *“not to get angry”* (Bukhari, *Kitab al-Adab*, 76).

There are different states of human beings. They sometimes are angry and sometimes cheerful. In order not to cause an injustice, an angry person should not make a decision right away. Upon the advice of the Prophet (pbuh) angry persons should sit if they are standing, and lie down if they are sitting. If they still cannot control their anger, they should perform ablution. After they completely control their



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“Whom do you count as a wrestler amongst you? We said: He who wrestles with strong persons. He said: No, it is not he but one who controls himself when in a fit of rage.”
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anger, they can make a decision, because usually balance is lost and judgment weakens during anger, and others rights may be infringed upon. Men of service should always be careful when it comes to moderation, courtesy and grace.

The psychological state of people is very important in educational services. Just like a pilot who does not feel psychologically normal cannot be given a license to fly, a teacher who is angry or who feels down should not be allowed into a classroom. At the same time, an angry teacher must search for the reason for his or her anger and try to control that anger at which point, instructions can calmly be given, along with warnings and advice, but must stay clear of certain extremes that could hurt the students.

Allah the Almighty calls our attention to gentleness in our way of speaking:

“And pursue the right course in your going about and lower your voice; surely the most hateful of voices is braying of the asses.” (31; 19)

When a need to forbid someone to commit something evil arises, not to hurt his/her feelings his/her fault the person should not be told directly; the act should be mentioned in general without mentioning the sinner's name or the speaker should attribute the fault to himself/herself. In fact the Prophet (pbuh) did not tell anybody's fault to his/her face, instead he used to delicately reprove and say:

*“What is it that I saw you doing such and such...”*⁴⁷

47. See Bukhari, Manakib, 25; Muslim, Kitab al-salat, 119.

The monumental figures of Islamic history who were raised with high morals have directed the members of the Muslim society from the lowest class to the sultans. Sheikh Edebali's advice to Othman Ghazi and all other statesmen in his person are very wise and meaningful:

*"O Son! You are an emir! From now on
Anger is for us; calmness is for you
Resentment is for us; reconciliation is for you
Blaming is for us; endurance is for you
Weaknesses, mistakes are for us; tolerance is for you
Dissension, disagreement, disputes are for us; justice
is for you
Evil eye, predicting bad luck and false comments are
for us; forgiveness is for you"*

*"O Son! From now on
Dividing is for us, integrating is for you
Laziness is for us; fostering, shaping is for you..."*⁴⁸

8 To give primacy to Qur'anic education

The Holy Qur'an is a Divine trust revealed to the servants of Allah as guidance for them. To carry this trust first to ourselves then to other human beings comes at the beginning of our most significant duties. In fact, in a tradition of the Prophet (pbuh) it is stated that:

48. See for the rest of Edebali's advices related section at the end of this book.



*And pursue
the right
course in
your go-
ing about
and lower
your voice;
surely the
most hateful
of voices is
braying of
the asses."*
(Qur'ān 31: 19)



“The best among you (Muslims) are those who learn the Qur'an and teach it.” (Bukhari, *Fadail al-Qur'an*, 21)

The greatest service that can be done for a human being is to help him to gain his eternal future. The method for this is to direct a believer to servitude to Allah on the straight path, which can only be achieved by attaining Qur'anic morals and sentiments.

The Qur'an is the source of Divine wisdom for destitute souls. Allah the Almighty presents His word to humanity as follows:

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ قَدْ جَاءَتُكُمْ مَوْعِظَةٌ مِّنْ رَبِّكُمْ
وَشِفَاءٌ لِمَا فِي الصُّدُورِ وَهُدًى وَرَحْمَةٌ لِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ

“O men! there has come to you indeed an admonition from your Lord and a healing for what is in the breasts and a guidance and a mercy for the believers.” (10; 57)

By consisting the perfection, truth and spiritual secrets which humanity needs until the Last Day, the Holy Qur'an is a sublime guide. This is stated in the Qur'an as follows:

“Surely this Quran guides to that which is most upright and gives good news to the believers who do good that they shall have a great reward.” (17; 9)

Prophet (pbuh) did not tell anybody's fault to his/her face, instead he used to delicately reprove and say: “What is it that I saw you doing such and such...”

Since the Holy Qur'an is a Divine book whose guidance will continue until the Last Day, Believers, who are under its shadow, should live according to

its guidance until they die. In other words, believers should be devoted to its guidance and should accept the future generations' spiritual guidance, peace and revival through the guidance of the Qur'an as their most sacred duty. The following account from the early period of Islam proves the greatness of this duty.

Upon a request the Messenger of Allah (pbuh) sent about seventy Qur'an teachers called "Qurra'" to the tribes of Ra'l, Zaqwan, Usayyah and Banu Lihyan. When they reached the place called "Bi'r Maunah", members of these tribes betrayed and martyred them. When the Prophet (pbuh) heard the news, he prayed for the destruction of the murderers for a month.

The curse of the Prophet of mercy (pbuh), who had not cursed for the people of Taif who stoned him, for the murderers of the teachers' of the Qur'an shows how big a sin is to prevent Qur'anic education. This also proves that according to the Prophet (pbuh) what an honorable duty is to teach Qur'an.

The high significance given by the Prophet (pbuh) to Qur'anic education was reflected in the souls of the Companions as love for the Holy Qur'an. Here is an example of the love that the Companions had for the Qur'an:

During the battle of Zat al-Riqa', Ammar b. Yasir and Abbad b. Bishr (may Allah be pleased with them) came to the Messenger of Allah (pbuh) and told him that they voluntarily would like to stand guard for the night. When their request was accepted, Ammar (may Allah be pleased with him)



*"The best
among you
(Muslims)
are those
who learn
the Qur'an
and teach it."
(Bukhari, Fadail
al-Qur'an, 21)*



Respect, love and fervor for the Holy Qur'an revives the souls, while neglect or disrespect for it is the main sin which darkens the spiritual life of human beings.

took the second turn and went to sleep. His friend Abbad (may Allah be pleased with him) stood up and started to pray. Then a polytheist saw him and shot an arrow at him. Abbad (may Allah be pleased with him) removed the arrow from his body and continued to pray. But then second and third arrows came and hit him. He did the same and continued his prayers. Finally he finished his prayer and woke 'Ammar up:

"Wake up, I've been shot." When 'Ammar woke up, the polytheist saw him and ran away. When 'Ammar saw Abbad in blood, he said:

"Subhanallah! Why didn't you wake me up after the first arrow?" Abbad (may Allah be pleased with him) replied:

"I had just started to recite a chapter from the Qur'an and I did not want to break my prayer before finishing it. But then arrows had started to come one after another, and I was forced to make ruku' and then wake you up. By Allah, if I did not fear to lose this post, which had been ordered to be protected by the Messenger of Allah, I would rather to die than to cut the recitation."⁴⁹

Respect, love and fervor for the Holy Qur'an revives the souls, while neglect or disrespect for it is the main sin which darkens the spiritual life of human beings. When the sins of his nation were shown to the messenger of Allah (pbuh), he saw that "forgetting the memorized Qur'an" was the greatest sin.⁵⁰

49. See Ahmad b. Hanbal, *Musnad*, III, 343-44.

50. Abu Dawud, *Kitab al-Salat*, 16

That is why we should both ourselves and our children learn and try to live according to the guidance of the Holy Qur'an so that we can revive its spiritual power and blessings. Otherwise the Holy Qur'an cannot affect our hearts. The Prophet (pbuh) expresses:

"An era will come for my nation when number of qurras (Qur'an readers) will increase; while jurists (wise scholars who do righteous deeds) will decrease and knowledge will be withdrawn... later such an era will come that what people read from Qur'an will not go below their throats." (Hakim, Mustadrak, IV, 504)

Allah the Almighty says in the Holy Qur'an:

"Most surely in the creation of the heavens and the earth and the alternation of the night and the day there are signs for men who understand."

"Those who remember Allah standing and sitting and lying on their sides and reflect on the creation of the heavens and the earth: Our Lord! Thou hast not created this in vain! Glory be to Thee; save us then from the chastisement of the fire!" (3; 190-91)

When these verses were revealed, the Prophet (pbuh) said:

"Woe onto those who do not think about these verses!" In another version:

*"Woe onto those who just chew these verses (just read them) and do not think about them..."*⁵¹

Qur'anic education should primarily start with entering its lofty atmosphere and the contemplation

51. See Ibn Hibban, *Sahih*, II 386.



"An era will come for my nation when number of qurras (Qur'an readers) will increase; while jurists (wise scholars who do righteous deeds) will decrease and knowledge will be withdrawn... later such an era will come that what people read from Qur'an will not go below their throats."
(Hakim, Mustadrak, IV, 504)



of the Qur'an. Otherwise reading the Qur'an without thinking about its meaning will "not go below the throat," in other words it will not benefit the servant's soul, as it is stated in the tradition of the Prophet.

The most important means of salvation from the periods of religious stagnation has been efforts in the path of Qur'an. Today these efforts display vital significance. In this age the most essential service to Islam is to increase the interest for Qur'anic education, which will enable the Muslim nation to wake up and go back to its own self.

As a matter of fact to believe the promise of that Allah the Almighty "**will complete (the revelation of) His Light.**" (61; 8) However, since Allah the Almighty will realize His promise in the hands of humans, we should do our best to fulfill our duty. Otherwise Our Lord will still complete His Light without our help, but those who neglect this duty will be held accountable. Divine punishment for the three people, who joined all the military campaigns but the Battle of Tabuk is a known incident in Islamic history. Then in order to be free from personal responsibility, it is necessary to be a benevolent person in the matters of serving Islam. What would be more honorable than having a share in the service of faith? However expecting that just faith and hope would bring Divine help without doing our best is something against the spirit of Islam.

"Woe onto those who just chew these verses (just read them) and do not think about them..."

"Ibn Hibban, Sahih, II, 386

In order to save ourselves from the negative effects of the modern age, i.e. disbelief, atheism and compromise to non-Islamic traditions, we should learn and teach the Qur'an to our family and to the

people around us. We should never forget our need for the Qur'an. To be in continuous relation with the Qur'an will lead us to find the path of the Qur'an and to be adorned with its ethics. To act against this will be a complete disappointment and frustration. It means to waste an eternal future for temporary pleasures.

Those who live away from the light of the Qur'an are the travelers of eternal darkness. Especially our school age kids need Qur'anic education, religious knowledge, faith and ethical training. The belief that only family can give a good religious education is not correct. Just like a proper scientific education would be received from a school, religious education should also be received from its masters; nevertheless, forgetting the youth around us while giving education to our own children is not an appropriate Islamic manner.

Training the young generation without the light of the Qur'an and spiritual sentiments is a very painful disappointment for human beings, the most honorable creation of the universe. The main responsibility of the parents is not just to feed their bodies but to feed their souls and prepare their eternal future.

In this age when most people submit to materialism, the teachers of the Qur'an must pay special attention to their students. The hearts of the students should be filled with love for their teacher. Before starting to learn the alphabet, they should learn the reality of the alphabet from their teacher. Student's tiny heart should be filled with Allah's love and His



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messenger's love; the beauty of Islam should find a place in their hearts.

We should start teaching the Word of Allah from inoculating them with the excitement of being addressed by Divine speech. In this way their tiny hearts will comprehend the difference between the Qur'anic alphabet and the other alphabets and they will show their respect to the Holy Qur'an as long as they live. Their souls will be molded with the meaning of it and will transform into a treasure of Divine secrets.⁵²

When innocent hearts filled with the love for Allah the Almighty, His Messenger and His Sacred Book, their worship will advance towards perfection. Because their faith will get stronger, their spiritual world will prosper. Then they will recite the Qur'an with a different taste and be more careful about its commands and prohibitions. They adorn themselves with the morals of the Messenger of Allah (pbuh).

To have such a child is a great eternal gain for all parents. The Messenger of Allah explains this gain as follows:

"Allah the Almighty raised the degree of his Servant in the Hereafter. The surprised servant asks:

"O Lord! Why did you raise my degree?"

Allah the Almighty says:

52. Our ancestors forbade their children who memorized the whole Qur'an to play the leapfrog game, because of their respect to the Holy Qur'an. Thus they provided the most suitable environment to raise their kids with whole respect to their sacred book.

“Because of your child’s prayer and repentance on your behalf” (Ahmad b. Hanbal, *Musnad*, II, 509; Ibn Majah, *Kitab al-Adab*, 1)

In another tradition, it is stated that:

“When a man dies, his acts come to an end, but three, recurring charity, or knowledge (by which people) benefit, or a pious son, who prays for him (for the deceased).”

(Muslim, *Kitab al-Wasiyyah*, 14; Tirmidhi, *Kitab al-Ahkam*, 36)

In short service to the Qur'an is Allah the Almighty's blessing to His servants, which requires great sensitivity and attention, and it is not only a work of the tongue but also of a sensitive heart.

9 Improving oneself scholarly and ethically

A man of service should not neglect his personal progress in order to offer quality service to humanity. Effort for continuous improvement must be his/her natural characteristic. The unqualified men of service who do not have enough knowledge and experience and who do not care about their moral and spiritual development cannot provide proper and serious services.

On the other hand, advancement and change in life is a Divine law. Every creature who cannot keep up with life is doomed to disappear. That is why men of service should observe this Divine law and accept to improve themselves as a duty.

Another important issue is the reality that the type of service and how it's performed change according to the conditions of time. Something that was essential yesterday might lose its importance



“Allah the Almighty raised the degree of his Servant in the Hereafter. The surprised servant asks: “O Lord! Why did you raise my degree?” Allah the Almighty says: “Because of your child’s prayer and repentance on your behalf”

(Ahmad b. Hanbal, *Musnad*, II, 509; Ibn Majah, *Kitab al-Adab*, 1)



today. The way it is performed may also change. To be able to see these facts are only achievable, if a man of service improves himself/herself. Mawlana Jalal al-Din Rumi's following verses show the necessity to change the way we utter our words:

"How many words there are, which belonged to yesterday, they were gone with yesterday

This is a new day; therefore new things should be said"

Ali (may Allah be pleased with him) says:

"Raise your kids not according to the requirements of your time but according to the requirements of their time", he points out the significance of taking the conditions of time into consideration.

The men of service should especially improve themselves in the following points:

*"How many words there are, which belonged to yesterday, they were gone with yesterday
This is a new day; therefore new things should be said"*
Jalal al-Din Rumi

a. Scholarly improvement

The men of service should primarily be equipped with the knowledge, which will provide them their eternal future. Not to fall into the traps of false thoughts and beliefs, a strong theological knowledge needs to be acquired. With the object of performing worships according to Divine guidelines, catechismal knowledge about Islam has to be acquired. In order to be a servant who obtains Allah's pleasure, the life of the Prophet (pbuh) should be learned and comprehended with a contemplative heart.

The Holy Qur'an should be transformed into a source of prosperity and illumination for our souls.

We should accept reading the Qur'an and living according to its principles as a duty.

The men of service should not neglect to read other books to increase their culture and improve their personality. From time to time they should read poetry and history books, stories from the Qur'an, advice from the Prophets and from the Sufi masters, Ali's (may Allah be pleased with him) written commands to the governors⁵³ and advice from the men of the soul.

In addition to reading books they should attend scholarly circles and conferences. This is the way to acquire knowledge orally. Conferences and circles of righteous scholars who live an upright life should especially not be missed.

b. Spiritual improvement

A man of service should also improve his spiritual state, as long as he continues his service. He should submit himself to his Lord and sincerely and modestly try to fulfill his duties with courtesy. If he does not spiritually improve, his service would create counter effects. Sometimes he might perform what he should have avoided, because he has lost his intuition (*al-firasah*). His service does produce any fruits, but only exhaustian. That is why in order to attain Divine help we have to give importance to mature our souls with piety.

53. For parts from *Amirname-i Ali* (Decree of Ali) see the related part of this book.



The Holy Qur'an should be transformed into a source of prosperity and illumination for our souls. We should accept reading the Qur'an and living according to its principles as a duty.



...And the most beloved things with which My slave comes nearer to Me, is what I have enjoined upon him; and My slave keeps on coming closer to Me through performing Nawafil (praying or doing extra deeds besides what is obligatory) till I love him, so I become his sense of hearing with which he hears, and his sense of sight with which he sees, and his hand with which he grips, and his leg with which he walks..."
 (Bukhari, Kitab al-Riqaq, 38)

To offer an acceptable service would be possible by having intuition and attaining Allah's help and this can be achieved by being a devoted servant of Allah the Almighty. This is explained in a Sacred Hadith as follows:

"...And the most beloved things with which My slave comes nearer to Me, is what I have enjoined upon him; and My slave keeps on coming closer to Me through performing Nawafil (praying or doing extra deeds besides what is obligatory) till I love him, so I become his sense of hearing with which he hears, and his sense of sight with which he sees, and his hand with which he grips, and his leg with which he walks; and if he asks Me, I will give him, and if he asks My protection (Refuge), I will protect him; (i.e. give him My Refuge) and I do not hesitate to do anything as I hesitate to take the soul of the believer, for he hates death, and I hate to disappoint him." (Bukhari, Kitab al-Riqaq, 38)

To maintain a robust and active heart and to make progress depends on freeing the heart from defects which is the place of Divine manifestations. This can be achieved by observing the following principles:

1. To be careful in regards to having lawful sustenance
2. To observe the rights of servants and creation
3. To be in a state of continuous supplication and repentance
4. To read the Qur'an and to abide by its rules
5. To perform worship in reverence

6. To spend nights with religious practices
(The more we lighten our nights up with prayer the more they will be reflected in our mornings. Times of dawn are the most valuable times of a day. Wasting such valuable moments is a bitter deprivation.)

7. To continue remembrance and contemplation of Allah the Almighty.

8. To contemplate death

9. To be together with the righteous and trustworthy people and stay away from the sinners and the dissolute

10. To attend circles of the scholars and the wise, who act what they know

11. To be men of charity

In short teachers, who train the future generations, are required to transform first their own hearts into Sufi convents. If their hearts do not turn into convents, they are not much different than the walls of a building, which would collapse and disappear after a while. Those who open their hearts to humanity live until Judgment Day, like Yunus Emre and Mawlana's spiritual lessons in their schools continue benefit others without interruption.

c. Professional advancement

The men of service must have knowledge and experience in his field of service. If this capacity is not achieved, the service would be ineffective, it might even be harmful. Services performed in the



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best manner will never be forgotten. In fact in a verse Allah the Almighty says:

إِنَّا لَا نُضِيعُ أَجْرَ مَنْ أَحْسَنَ عَمَلًا

“...We do not waste the reward of he who does a good work.” (18; 30)

And the messenger of Allah says:

“Allah the Almighty loves His servant who does his job in the best and the soundest way.” (Daylami, Musnad, I, 157)

Therefore, the men of service are responsible to learn the best method with which they can perform their service. Another issue that can be inferred from the aforementioned tradition is serving while in the state of *ihsan*, that is serving creation as if we see Allah the Almighty, as serving with this frame of mind, no doubt, attracts Divine love.

In short, to improve ourselves scholarly and ethically means to advance and to perfect our outward and inward characteristics, because qualified generations can only be raised by qualified teachers who raise their students both scholarly and ethically. Unqualified teachers train unqualified and weak students. For lofty and high objects can be achieved by perfect individuals, these perfect individuals must be educated in the hands of skillful teachers with upright character.

As a matter of fact if there are qualified people in a society, who can shoulder the services, it would be possible and easy to transmit the people of that society to the peaks. If a society lacks such qualified

“Allah the Almighty loves His servant who does his job in the best and the soundest way.”
(Daylami, Musnad, I, 157)

people, it simply alludes to a crisis of manpower. Just like a headless body, that society cannot survive. That is why the most important matter is to train qualified people with high character and qualities, like the late poet Mehmed Akif says:

"It requires a real man to transform a nation into a real nation..."

On one occasion Umar (may Allah be pleased with him) was sitting with his friends. He asked them to make some requests from Allah the Almighty. Some of them said:

"I wish I this room was full of money, so that I could give it as charity."

Some others said:

"I wish this house was full of gold so that I could spend it in the way of Allah the Almighty."

However when Umar said:

"More, more ask more" they said:

"What else can we ask?" Umar said:

"I would ask that this house be full of people like Abu Ubayda b. Jarrah, Muaz b. Jabal and Huzayfa al-Yamani and appoint them the jobs of conveying the message of Islam and improving the society." (Bukhari, *Tarikh al-Saghir*, I, 54)

10 To attribute the mistakes to ones own self and success to Allah the Almighty

It is very important not to mix selfish feelings with the service carried out for the sake of Allah.



If there are qualified people in a society, who can shoulder the services, it would be possible and easy to transmit the people of that society to the peaks.



"I would ask that this house be full of people like Abu Ubayda b. Jarrah, Muaz b. Jabal and Huzayfa al-Yamani and appoint them the jobs of conveying the message of Islam and improving the society."
 (Bukhari, Tarikh al-Saghir, I, 54)

Men of service should be careful when it comes to recognizing the success brought by Allah the Almighty and not to give themselves full credit, but to thank Allah for His help and divine will. Allah the Almighty states about the victory of the believers at the Battle of Badr:

فَلَمْ تَقْتُلُوهُمْ وَلَكِنَّ اللَّهَ قَتَلَهُمْ وَمَا رَمَيْتَ
 إِذْ رَمَيْتَ وَلَكِنَّ اللَّهَ رَمَى

“So you did not slay them, but it was Allah Who slew them, and you did not smite when you smote (the enemy), but it was Allah Who smote: ...” (8; 17)

Another example in this matter is this:

Pharaoh found himself weak when he saw the miracles of Moses (pbuh). In order to save himself from this situation, he gathered the most talented magicians of his time and arranged a competition between the magicians and Moses (pbuh). However he still was concerned about the result so he asked the magicians:

“Well, are you going to be able to beat Moses?”

The head magician replied:

“We are at the highest level of magic. There is nobody better than we are in magic. Unless some magic breaking power comes down from the sky, we will certainly win this contest. Of course we are more powerful.”

The contest was agreed to be held on a holiday. Everybody gathered and the public was anxious to see what was going to happen. The magicians threw their ropes and rods to the ground and each one of them transformed his own staff into a snake. This scene is depicted in the Qur'an as follows:

“He said: Nay! cast down, then lo! their cords and their rods-- it was imaged to him on account of their magic as if they were running. So Musa conceived in his mind a fear. We said: Fear not, surely you shall be the uppermost, And cast down what is in your right hand; it shall devour what they have wrought; they have wrought only the plan of a magician, and the magician shall not be successful wheresoever he may come from.” (20; 66-9)

Moses (pbuh) then threw down his staff which immediately transformed into a large snake and swallowed all the tricks of the magicians. This was not a human magic show; it was a Divine miracle from Allah the Almighty. All that the magicians did was trickery.

The head magician told one of his friends, when he saw what Moses did:

“Look at Moses when his staff is doing its job; I wonder what his state will be...”

His friend did what he was told and watched Moses carefully. What he saw was that Moses became pale and the color of his face changed, while his staff was continuing to do its job. He informed the head magician about what he saw:



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cian shall not
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(Qur'an 20; 66-9)



Our job in the path of Allah the Almighty is to do our best then leave the rest to Allah the Almighty (tawakkul). And we should believe that the result will become actualized according to His Divine will.

“When the incident was happening, Moses became pale, however his staff kept doing its job.”

When the head magician heard this, he said:

“This is not a trick of Moses, but it’s a work of Allah the Almighty, because a magician would not be afraid of his own trick, as an artist would never be afraid of his art. Then this is Divine work...” and accepted the faith of Moses (pbuh).

The other magicians followed him and they converted to the new faith, too.

This incident also reveals that if we do not mix our selfish feelings with our service and seek only the pleasure of Allah the Almighty, we will receive Allah the Almighty’s blessings and have successful results, even if our abilities or capabilities are not strong enough for the service. In fact Moses (pbuh) felt scared because for a moment he thought he did not have the necessary capabilities for the contest, however he took refuge in Allah the Almighty and acted according to Allah’s command and consequently he received a Divine miracle. In other words Divine power came to his help and he baffled the magicians.

Therefore our job in the path of Allah the Almighty is to do our best then leave the rest to Allah the Almighty (tawakkul). And we should believe that the result will become actualized according to His Divine will. How nicely our predecessors put this fact into the maxim of **“Success is only from Allah the Almighty...”**.

In other words, we are the ones who plant a seed in to the earth, but Allah is the one who decides whether it will transform into a great maple tree or decay and vanish. Again, Moses (pbuh) is the one who threw his staff, but Allah the Almighty transformed it into a large snake, which swallowed the other snakes.

Therefore we should look at the Sender of the blessings not the blessings themselves. Rumi states:

“Though the iron has become red, it is not red (by nature): it (the redness) is a ray borrowed from something that strikes fire.”

*“If the window or the house is full of light, do not deem aught luminous except the sun.”*⁵⁴

*“Then the sun says, “O you who are not right (in your belief), when I set it will become evident (you will see what the truth is).”*⁵⁵

Abd al-Qadir al-Jilani gives the following advise about the same issue:

“O Son! When are you going to be freed from the ties of ability-knowledge and reach the station of Divine might? When will your deeds take you to the might of Allah the Almighty?

Do not run away from Allah the Almighty just because of the misfortunes He has inflicted upon you. Allah afflicts you with some misfortunes and here is the reason for this: To see whether you are going to look at the causes and leave His door or

54. Vol. I verse 3261-62.

55. Vol. 1 verse 3264



“If the window or the house is full of light, do not deem aught luminous except the sun.”

“Then the sun says, “O you who are not right (in your belief), when I set it will become evident (you will see what the truth is).”

Jalāl al-Dīn Rumi



“O Son! When are you going to be freed from the ties of ability-knowledge and reach the station of Divine might? When will your deeds take you to the might of Allah the Almighty?”

Abd al-Qadir al-Jilani

stick to His door; whether you are going to lean on to the apparent or the hidden cause; whether you are going to turn to the visible or the Invisible; **Whether you are going to regard the knowledge, ability and capabilities from yourself or from the Allah the Almighty...”**

This means real believers know that all strength belongs to Allah the Almighty and they do not assume any share for themselves in their success. Further, they are even grateful to Allah the Almighty for giving them the opportunity.

Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent’s, who was able to manage to couple the worldly sultanate with the spiritual sultanate; following the attitude towards his successes can be a measurement for all men of service.

Barbarossa Hayreddin Pasha defeated the fleet of Andrea Doria at the Battle of Preveza. Andrea Doria fled and barely saved his life. Barbarossa turned back to Istanbul with thousands of captives. The surface of the sea was full with captured enemy galleys. Sultan Suleiman was watching the glorious scene from his palace. One of the pashas excitedly said:

“O my sultan! I wonder how many times the world has witnessed such a glorious scene? You should be very proud right now.”

Sultan Suleiman responded:

“O Pasha! Should we be proud or grateful to our Lord and praise Him for bestowing us this victory?”

If men of service follow these guidelines, they would free themselves from their self and their modesty and humility would intensify. They would be saved from conceit, which is the most dangerous disease of the self.

It is stated in the following verse that: "...**Exult not, for Allah loveth not those who exult**" (28; 76). That is why a servant must take refuge in Allah the Almighty from the dangers of diseases of selfishness and pride. Even though the Prophet (pbuh) had such lofty qualities and merits, when he talked about

himself, he always said "لَا فَخْرٌ" or "no pride" and maintained his humility. He only wanted to express the blessings conferred upon him by Allah, and to avoid pride or arrogance. The Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) said:

"I am the commander of the messengers, but there is no pride. I am the last one of the prophets, but there is no pride. I am the first one who will intercede and whose intercession will be accepted, but I am in no way telling these out of pride."

"On the Judgment Day, when the earth is opened will be the first one resurrected, but I am not telling this out of pride. The banner of gratitude will be given to me, but I am not bragging about this. On the Judgment Day, I am the master of mankind, but no pride. On the Judgment Day, I am the first one who enters the Paradise, but I am in no way telling these out of pride." (Darimi, Muqaddimah, 8)

In fact "egoism" and "obstinacy" are like cancer in the path of service and their treatment is very



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for giving
them the
opportunity.*



If you realized your weakness, then the smallest deed becomes a mountain

Your deficiencies become complete, all poisons become oil and honey, Mountains become fruitful gardens; entire universe becomes an orchard for you.

difficult. You can usually see a calligraphy written “naught” on it in the Sufi convents. This is to inculcate people their nothingness. The main point is to recognize our weakness and realize that we are just servants. When a servant reaches this station, even a small deed would be enough for his salvation. This fact is expressed in the following poetry:

If you realized your weakness, then the smallest deed becomes a mountain

Your deficiencies become complete, all poisons become oil and honey,

Mountains become fruitful gardens; entire universe becomes an orchard for you.⁵⁶

Knowing that they are weak, those who get in to serve creation should ask Divine help. This is expressed in the following verse:

“Ye who believe! Seek help with patient perseverance and prayer: for Allah is with those who patiently persevere.” (2: 153)

Believers should follow this Divine advice and ask Allah the Almighty’s assistance for the success in their service through two *rak’ahs* of necessity (*hajah*) prayer especially at dawn.

Men of service should not blame anybody else for the flaws in the path of the service and should turn to themselves to look for the deficiencies. They should be able to direct the tolerance to others and question themselves, because the spiritual state of

56. The quotation is taken from M. Asad Arbili’s *tahmis* (poem composed by adding three lines rhyming with the first line of each couplet of a *gazel*) over Niyazi Baba’s *gazel*.

the men of service affects those who are served. A mistake seen in those who are served is actually a reflection of a problem in the men of service.

Imam Rabbani (may Allah bless his soul) gives the following advice in a letter to one of disciples:

“...You wrote that you have complaints about your students and your feelings are hurt. Whereas you were supposed to be hurt and complain from your own actions; because you treat them in such a way that complaints become inevitable; Whereas a teacher is advised to treat his students nicely. Just telling stories and parables to them and becoming friends with them is not welcomed... (In other words instead of talking he should be an example with his actions.)” (Maktubat, 209th letter)



11 To try to be a role model

Men of service should shoulder their duty instead of telling others to do it. Those who sit in their corners, give orders and think that they are serving the people are the ones who could not comprehend the essence of the serving others.

Those who lead others in service should embrace their service more than those who are under their lead. Such a behavior will increase his brothers' excitement and they will do their job more eagerly. It is possible to see several examples of this in the life of the Messenger of Allah (pbuh). In fact just some of the examples are that he (pbuh) carried bricks in the construction of Quba and Medinah Mosques; he worked in the digging of the trench in the Battle of



“Ye who believe! Seek help with patient perseverance and prayer: for Allah is with those who patiently persevere.”
(Qur’ān 2: 153)



Khandaq and he sometimes personally served his Companions.

His saying: *"The master of a nation is the one who serves them."* (Daylami, *Musnad*, 324) proves that leaders of service should not await service from others, but be the first to serve others.

If the leaders of the population personally serve others, this will spiritually affect others in service and it will create a group spirit. In this way many difficult jobs will be handled easier. History is full of examples of this spirit.

For instance, Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent was one of those who personally and actively lived with this spirit. His attendance to the Battle of Szigetvár, while he was at the end of his life not having much strength, is enough to exemplify this spirit. When he was going to the Battle of Szigetvár, his grand vizier Sokullu came to him and said:

"O my sultan! You have already given countless victories to this nation. You are tired. You have endowed your life to the Muslim world. It will be really hard for you to attend this battle at this age. Hence I think you should stay in Istanbul and administer the affairs of the populace. I, other viziers and pashas can go and lead the army."

"The master of a nation is the one who serves them."
(Daylami, *Musnad*, 324)

Sultan responded:

"Listen to me carefully, O Sokullu! Tell my will to the future generation. A Sultan should always be with his soldiers in a battle. When soldiers see their sultan with them, their courage heightens. The enemy, on the other hand, will see our army being

much stronger and will be disheartened. The real factor that wins a battle is spiritual strength. We have gained extensive experience since our childhood. Our experience might be needed in military campaigns. Very often minutes even seconds might change the outcome of a war. That is why I will join this campaign. How can I face my brave predecessors in the Hereafter, if I stay back and die in my bed?"

Sokullu remained silent after saying: "The decision belongs to our sultan."

How was he going to be able to finish this campaign? During the campaign in order to look upright, he was strapped with belts. The battle began and it was a rainy season. At one point, the cannon carriages stuck in mud and the oxen could not pull the carriages out of the mud. The army had been ahead and there were not enough soldiers around. The sultan ordered "all the high rank officers including generals to go into the mud and shoulder the carriages." The carriages were pulled out of swamp with the help of pashas. Sultan turned to the royal historian (*vak'anuvist*) and said:

"Write these down so that future generations can read and take lessons. Sultan Suleiman's pashas and viziers went into a swamp and saved the cannon carriages. So a disaster was overcome in this way." The sultan bestowed a very good example for the future generations.

Throughout history, the general populace has maintained good conduct when the public administrators had good manners, because of the affinity between the public and its leaders. For



Throughout history, the general populace has maintained good conduct when the public administrators had good manners, because of the affinity between the public and its leaders.



“Has not the time yet come for those who believe that their hearts should be humble for the remembrance of Allah and what has come down of the truth? And that they should not be like those who were given the Book before, but the time became prolonged to them, so their hearts hardened, and most of them are transgressors.”

(Qur'an 57; 16)

instance when Umar b. Abd al-Aziz acceded to the caliphate, he found a morally devastated population. During his two and a half year ruling, several things changed and both spiritually and materially numerous conquests were made. In other words, the life style of the leader found its reflection in the lives of the populace.

Even though everybody in the service of the others should be adorned with this moral horizon, it is especially needed by the public administrators.

12 Not to lose excitement and to be persistent

The most effective motivational forces, which makes the men of service run to serve others and perform their services with pleasure, are the love and excitement felt for serving others. Those who do not carry this type of excitement in their hearts will not be able to experience the pleasure of serving others.

It is a known fact that the ascension of the intuitions and even the states occur during the peak moments of the excitement. For instance Sultan Suleiman's era, the high points of the Ottoman State, was a period in which the entire community embraced each other with faith and excitement. It was possible to observe the manifestations of their faith and excitement in the lives of each member of the society starting from the laymen to the Sultan.

For instance, after the victory of the battle of Preveza, a soldier came to Istanbul to give the good news. When he entered from the gates of Topkapi

Palace, he strongly pulled the reins of his horse. It reared up and turned around for a while. When Sultan Suleiman saw this scene, he said to the soldier:

“What a wild horse you have!” The soldier’s response was a manifestation of his enthusiasm:

“O my Sultan! Mediterranean was like a wild horse, too, but we have managed to smooth it down.”

In those days everybody in the Ottoman society shared the same feelings; however as soon as they started to lose their enthusiasm, their decline began. The advancement and growth of services in the path of Allah the Almighty depends on the extent of religious excitement and emotions. According to Ibn Abbas’ report (may Allah be pleased with him), the following verse was revealed when laxity and laziness appeared in the hearts of the Muslims:

“Has not the time yet come for those who believe that their hearts should be humble for the remembrance of Allah and what has come down of the truth? And that they should not be like those who were given the Book before, but the time became prolonged to them, so their hearts hardened, and most of them are transgressors.” (57; 16)⁵⁷

Sometimes feelings of satiation may occur for some men of service, which signals the beginning of a dangerous situation for them. The feeling of “*that’s enough*” is a whisper of self calling him to the worldly desires. The following report from Abu Imran (r.a.)



*“Do not
throw
yourselves
with
your own
hands into
destruction”*
(Qur'an 2; 195)

57. Ibn Kathir, *Tafsir*, IV, 332.



Faith, which connects the believer to Allah, the sole possessor of Might, is also a form of excitement. The possessor of faith should never be afraid of anything and never lose hope.

displays the significance of having same excitement of service until end of life:

During the Umayyad period, a Muslim army under the command of Abdurrahman b. Walid gathered for a campaign to conquer Istanbul. Khalid b. Zayd Abu Ayyub Al-Ansari (may Allah be pleased with him) was among the soldiers. During the battle, an Ansar was seen riding his horse behind the enemy lines, and he did not come back. When the believers saw what he did, they remembered the verse "**do not throw yourselves with your own hands into destruction**"⁵⁸ and said:

"*La ilaha Illallah!* Look what he did! He willfully threw himself into danger."

Upon hearing this Abu Ayyub al-Ansari said:

"O Believers! Please don't take this verse wrong. It was revealed down about us, or the Ansar. When Allah the Almighty had bestowed His victory to His Messenger (pbuh), we said: "Now we can deal with the improvement of our property." Upon this, Allah the Almighty revealed:

وَأَنفَقُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللهِ وَلَا تُلْقُوا بِأَيْدِيْكُمْ
إِلَى التَّهْلِكَةِ

"You shall spend in the cause of ALLAH; do not throw yourselves with your own hands into danger..." (2; 195) The danger "about throwing ourselves into destruction" mentioned in this verse is to

58. Holy Qur'an 2; 195

keep ourselves busy with the world and neglect and stay behind from serving the path of Islam.”

Abu Ayyub al-Ansari, who sincerely listened to this Divine warning, never stayed away from serving Islam and finally he was martyred during the above-mentioned campaign and buried close to the walls of Istanbul.⁵⁹

Abu Ayyub al-Ansari’s, who went to the aforementioned campaign in his eighties and who had the honor of having the Messenger of Allah (pbuh) as a guest for about six months when he (pbuh) first arrived to Madinah, is a sufficient example of how a man of service should strive and feel the enthusiasm of his faith.

Faith, which connects the believer to Allah, the sole possessor of Might, is also a form of excitement. The possessor of faith should never be afraid of anything and never lose hope. As a matter of fact it is stated in a verse:

“And be not infirm, and be not grieving, and you shall have the upper hand if you are believers.”
(3; 139)

Men of service should be solvers of problems, not the creators of problems. They should not just talk, and look for mistakes to criticize but have a positive spirit and should be able to approach the incidents constructively.

To show your exhaustion and stand aside before the problems is a sign of weakness, and weakness does not befit a believer. Men of service should

59. See Abu Dawud, *Jihad*, 23; Tirmidhi, *Tafsir*, 2.



“And be not infirm, and be not grieving, and you shall have the upper hand if you are believers.”
(Qur’ān 3; 139)



“O Allah! I seek refuge with you (Allah) from (worries) care and grief, from incapacity and laziness, from miserliness and cowardice, from being heavily in debt and from being overpowered by other men.”
(Bukhari, Daawat (Invocations), 38)

always keep the following supplication of the Messenger of Allah in their hearts and tongues:

“O Allah! I seek refuge with you (Allah) from (worries) care and grief, from incapacity and laziness, from miserliness and cowardice, from being heavily in debt and from being overpowered by other men.” (Bukhari, Daawat (Invocations), 38)

The most essential points for the success in service are patience and determination. It is stated in the following verses:

“O you who believe! be patient and excel in patience and remain steadfast, and be careful of (your duty to) Allah, that you may be successful.” (3; 200)

“Ye who believe! Seek help with patient perseverance and prayer: for Allah is with those who patiently persevere.” (2; 153)

Elmalili Hamdi Yazir wrote the following statements regarding the commentary of this verse:

*“Al-sabur or the Patient is one of the names of Allah the Almighty. This means whoever has patience displays a manifestation of this Divine attribute. Especially when the patient people come together and become a congregation, they would receive Allah’s assistance Allah becomes their Friend and Guardian.”*⁶⁰

It is very normal to face some problems and difficulties during giving service to others. If these problems are faced with determination and patience,

60. See Yazır, Elmalili M. Hamdi, *Hak Dîni Kur’ân Dili*, v. I, p. 546.

Divine help will come and there will be success at the end with the permission of Allah the Almighty.

Imam Rabbani says:

“The problems and difficulties on the path of conveying the truth of Islam should be regarded as blessings. The Prophets faced with many troubles and suffered with great grievances. Even Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) who is the most virtuous of all Prophets (peace be upon them) says:

*“None of the Prophet suffered with the inflictions, which I did.”*⁶¹ (Mektubat, 193rd letter)

The following lines by Muhammad Iqbal shed light on the path for every man of service:

“A gazelle was complaining to another gazelle:

“From now on I will live in Mecca and Qa’bah. There I can sleep, walk around and graze; because here in the meadows hunters wait in ambush for us gazelles. From now on I would like to feel safe. I would like to let my soul feel a little tranquility...”

To this, the other gazelle responded:

“O my smart friend! If you would like to live, live in danger. Sharpen yourself with a grindstone, and live sharpest than a sword. Danger tests the strength. It lets us know what our body and soul is able to do.”

Sufyan al-Sawri (q.s.) expressed this fact saying:

61. Tirmidhi, *Sifat al-Qiyamah*, 34.



“O you who believe! be patient and excel in patience and remain steadfast, and be careful of (your duty to) Allah, that you may be successful.”
(Qur'an 3; 200)



“Going Horasan and conveying the message of Islam is more profitable for you than living in the neighborhood of Mecca.”

A man of service should never quail against the difficulties and inflictions. On the contrary they should gain strength against the troubles of the path of the service. They should never forget that elixir for the eternal salvation, which is usually hidden in difficulties and sufferings. As a matter of fact, it is not possible to reach blessings without sufferings, for efforts spent in the path of a goal make life valuable and blessed.

Serving others should not be a capricious love. On the contrary, it must be considered as a lifelong duty. The sustenance of the men of service must be patience and their support should be Allah the Almighty.

It is stated in the sayings of the elders:

People who have the following three attributes are away from Allah:

1. Those who run away from serving others, thinking of their own comfort
2. Those who run away from the places of sorrow, pretending that they were too sensitive to stay there
3. Those who spend time with the dissolute and sinners

And the pleasure of good deeds shows itself in the following three:

1. In faith combined with love

“Ye who believe! Seek help with patient perseverance and prayer: for Allah is with those who patiently persevere.”
(2: 153)

2. In prayers performed with piety and reverence
3. In service adorned with goodness

In conclusion, acceptance of services by Allah the Almighty depends on its performance with serious manners and sensitivity. Just as it is not usually possible to have the expected results from haphazardly performed services, they may even end up with harmful results.

To be able to serve the creation of Allah the Almighty with mercy and love is something that requires strong patience and perseverance. A perfect man of service is one who is adorned with attributes like mercy, compassion, altruism and generosity and who is away from hate and grudge.

If it is carefully examined, it can be seen that the Qur'an consists of all of the abovementioned attributes. In addition, the stories in the Qur'an provide supplements for these principles. The legal verses of the Qur'an, on the other hand, show the obligatory application of our ethical actions.

Ethics, which essentially consists of religious maturity, means the transition from an animal-like state to that of humans, from immature attributes to a perfect character. The essence of ethics can be found in turning our faces to Our Lord, the Absolute Goodness. And the path to the Lord goes through serving His creation.

It does not matter in which society a man of service lives, he keeps his enthusiasm, faith and personality; and he protects his heart from the love of



"The problems and difficulties on the path of conveying the truth of Islam should be regarded as blessings.

The Prophets faced with many troubles and suffered with great grievances."
Imam Rabbani (q.s.)



property - possessions, office and benefit; and finally he/she runs to serve the weak and destitute.

Dear Lord! Bless us with all these praised attributes. Give us the enthusiasm to serve others. Bless us with the awareness of our responsibility for those whom we can help and let us at least feel the sorrow of helplessness for those whom we cannot go and help!

Amin!



*“Going
Horasan and
conveying
the message
of Islam is
more profit-
able for you
than living
in the neigh-
borhood
of Mecca.”*
Sufyan al-Sawri
(r.a.)

SOME PARTS FROM AMIRNAME-I ALI

Parts from Ali' (may Allah be pleased with Him) *Amirname* (Written Commands) to Harith b. Ashtar, the Governor of Egypt



Adorn your heart with mercy, love and good treatment to the people under your command and management. Do not treat them like a treasure eating fierce lion.

People may make mistakes; they sometimes intentionally or unintentionally do wrong. Just like you ask forgiveness from Allah the Almighty for yourself, forgive them and treat them well.

Never regret your forgiveness towards them or be happy about punishing them. If there is chance to avoid trouble, do not rush into it. Never say "I have power, I order and they obey", because this spoils your heart and weakens your faith. It gives you conceit, and conceit leads to destruction.

If the post you occupy gives you pride and arrogance, remember Allah's Absolute Might and it will bring you back to your senses. Never go into a race with the Might of Allah; because Allah the Almighty takes down every despot and degrades every bit of arrogance.

Never deviate from justice. If you do, you will be an oppressor. And Allah will be the plaintiff on behalf of the oppressed. When Allah becomes an op-

People may make mistakes; they sometimes intentionally or unintentionally do wrong. Just like you ask forgiveness from Allah the Almighty for yourself, forgive them and treat them well.



ponent for someone, all his arguments become nullified and void against Divine strength. Divine hostility continues until the oppressing servant repents. There is no other sin that hinders Divine blessing and causes Divine wrath more than oppression.

When you set out to do something or perform any given task, prefer the moderate and the most inclusive one in respect to justice and the one which protects everyone's rights.

You should stay away from those who look for people's faults, as it is the governor's duty, before anyone else, to cover up such faults of people.

Never begrudge people. Cut the ropes which will lead you to revenge. Pretend you did not understand the things that are not clear to you, and do not believe the words of whistle blowers immediately, because no matter how naïve they look, they, are in fact, deceitful.

Never take a stingy person, a coward or an ambitious person into your chamber; the first will try to scare you with poverty and hunger in an effort to dissuade you from helping others, the second will try to undermine your determination, and the third glorifies ambition and these are attributes that Allah the Almighty hates.

Confide only in those who are modest and pious. Be careful of people's applauds and do not be deceived by their flattery. Too much praise can fill you with excessive pride.

Do not treat the good and the bad equally, for it may alienate people from doing goodness.

Never deviate from justice. If you do, you will be an oppressor. And Allah will be the plaintiff on behalf of the oppressed.

Always have good opinion about people so that you can save yourself from unnecessary exhaustion.

Put such a person in charge of public services that he should be more sincere towards Allah and His Messenger (pbuh), more virtuous and more intelligent than the others. When he gets angry, he should be able to control his anger, behave calmly, listen to everybody's complaints quietly, have mercy on the weak, stay away from those who have submitted to their desires and he should not be one of those who stand up angrily but sits down with regret.

Do not neglect the simple deeds because of pre-occupation with more important affairs.

There is no more effective source of consolation for the governors than establishing justice in the community and being a governor loved by the public. People cannot reveal their affection unless they feel safe.

Know well the sacrifices of the men of service. Do not remember someone's service with another person and do not show anybody less deference than his/her bravery deserves. Someone's high social status should not lead you to see his small acts as great deeds and someone's lower rank must not prevent you to see the greatness of their deeds.

Do not give position to anybody with partisanship or selfish motives; because these motives lead to oppression and disloyalty.

Follow the performance of those whom you put in charge. Send trustworthy and loyal watchmen be-



When you set out to do something or perform any given task, prefer the moderate and the most inclusive one in respect to justice and the one which protects everyone's rights.



Confide only in those who are modest and pious. Be careful of people's applauds and do not be deceived by their flattery. Too much praise can fill you with excessive pride.

hind them; because knowing how they do their job will ensure them to do their best and to go easy on the population.

Think about the people that are away from you and do not abandon them. Search if there are any people among them who cannot take their situation to you because of the stalling of the people around you. Appoint God-fearing, modest and trustworthy clerks just to take care the affairs of this kind of people. So these clerks can be intermediaries between you and the people who cannot reach you and let you know how their conditions really are. In short work so hard that you may be able to say to Allah the Almighty on the Judgment Day: "I did my best."

Devote special time and place to listen to the problems of the people in need. Sit with them and show your modesty which invites the contentment of Allah the Almighty. Forgive their inappropriate behavior and talk. Do not reproach them or show off any power. If you do not hurt their feelings, then Allah will open His mercy to you and reward you for your obedience. When you give, give with a smiling face and a happy soul. If you cannot give, then ask their forgiveness and apologize with viable excuses.

Even though all activities for the goodness of the populace invite the contentment of Allah the Almighty, you should still devote the most auspicious time for yourself to improve your relationship with Allah.

Allot the servitude rights of Allah from your day and night and perform these rights completely

no matter what your circumstances are. If you lead a prayer, do not prolong it as much as it would tire the congregation or shorten it too much, because there might be people in the congregation who are sick or who have urgent things to do. When the Prophet (pbuh) was sending me to Yemen, I asked him:

“How should I lead their prayers?” and he (pbuh) answered:

“According to the state of the weakest one in the congregation...”

Have mercy on the believers. Do not live disconnected from society. Just think, if governors live disconnected from the public, it would prevent them from acquiring proper knowledge about the state of the public. To sit behind the curtains prevents them to see what is happening in the community. Therefore, they start to see massive problems little and the little ones big. Good things become bad and the nasty ones become nice. Right and wrong get confused.

Persuade everybody, whether they are close to you or far away, to accept the right. If the populace thinks that you are an oppressor, apologize to them and try to change their bad opinion about you. In this way you will be able to both control yourself and treat them well.

In order to fulfill your promise, if it is absolutely necessary, you should even be ready to give your life. Never break your promises; because nobody except the fools, who are doomed to be destitute, are bold enough to oppose Allah the Almighty. Also, do not make contracts open to interpretation.



Even though all activities for the goodness of the populace invite the contentment of Allah the Almighty, you should still devote the most auspicious time for yourself to improve your relationship with Allah.



Beware the excessive pride! Do not trust the appealing sides of your self. Do not wait to be praised to your face; because this is the strongest weapon of the Devil, to destroy the good deeds of the righteous.

Do not taunt the populace by reminding them what you did for them. Do not also exaggerate your deeds, and do not turn away from your promises, either. Because taunting finishes off blessings and exaggeration turns off the truth. Breaking promises attracts both Creator's and creation's hate.

Do not start to work before its time. When the time comes, do not rush. Do not persist to do things which you do not know its content and when you know, do not wait to start.

Do not pretend that you do not know what to do, when you learn the inappropriate deeds of your men. Otherwise you get punished on behalf of somebody else. The truth about the actions appears in front of your eyes and the rights of the oppressed are taken from you.

Control your anger, your hand, your tongue, and your desires. Stay away from misfortunes to protect yourself so that your anger fades and you control your willpower; however you should also know that you will never be able to control yourself unless you feel worried by remembering that you will return to Allah the Almighty.

Our invocation is to Allah and all praises and blessings be upon His Messenger!

*"Have
mercy on the
believers.
Do not live
disconnected
from soci-
ety."
Sheikh Edebali*

SOME ADVICE FROM EDEBALI

From the unique advice of Sheikh Edebali to
Othman Ghazi



“O Son!

You are the Emir! From now on anger is for us, clemency is for you... Feeling to be offended is for us, pleasing the souls is for you... Blaming is for us, bearing is for you... Weakness and faults are for us, tolerance is for you ... Disagreements, fights and arguments are for us, justice is for you... Evil eye, predicting bad luck and unjust interpretation is for us, forgiveness is for you...”

“O Son!

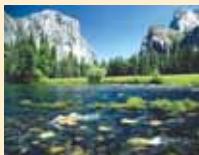
From now on dividing is for us, integration is for you... Laziness is for us, warning, encouraging and planning is for you...”

“O Son!

Your weight is heavy, your job is hard and your power is holding to a hair. May Allah the Almighty assist you and bless your emirate. May He make it good for the path of the Truth and brighten its light and make it to be seen from far away. May He give you the strength to carry your weight and the wisdom and heart to clear your path.”

“O Son!

*“Respect
your mom
and dad!
Know that
blessings
are with the
elders.”*
Sheikh Edebali



You are strong, wise and fine speaker; but if you do now how and where to use them, you would be thrown away with the first wind of the morning. Your anger and your self get together and defeat your wisdom. That is why you should always be patient, determined and resolute.”

“Patience is very important. An Emir should know to be patient. A flower does not bloom before its time. A raw pear cannot be eaten, even if it is eaten, it would stuck in your throat. A sword without knowledge is like a raw pear...”

“Let the nation’s knowledge live in them. Do not turn your back to it. Always hear its existence. This knowledge is the thing that administers the public and keeps it alive...”

“O Son!

There are people who are born at dawn and die at night. “

“World is not as big as your eyes see. All unconquered secrets and unknowns will only be revealed through your grace and justice.”

“Respect your mom and dad! Know that blessings are with the elders.”

“If you lose your faith, you turn from greenery to deserts or arid lands.”

“Talk openly! Do not get easily offended! If you see something (which is better and more beneficial to be hidden), do not tell; if you hear, do not reveal! Do not go (as often as get people tired from you) to

“The greatest victory is to know your self. The real enemy is a human’s self, while a friend is the one who knows himself/ herself.”

Sheikh Edebali

the places where you are loved; because, this would hurt their love and respect to you..."

"Feel sorry for the three persons: for a wise person who is among the ignorant, a rich person who gets poor and a respected person who loses peoples respect."

"Don't forget those who are at high places are not as safe as those at lower places."

"Do not be afraid to insist on your rightful case. You should know that a good horse is called sorrel, and a good young man is called crazy (brave, fearless, and bold)."

"The greatest victory is to know your self. The real enemy is a human's self, while a friend is the one who knows himself/herself. When a human sits down, it would be really difficult to stand him up. When a human sits very long, he starts to get numb. When he gets numb, he starts to talk. Then his talk turns into gossip. When gossip starts, he can never be recovered. Friend becomes enemy, and enemy becomes a monster..."

"One day a person's strength gets exhausted but knowledge lives. The light of knowledge goes even through closed eyes."

"When an animal dies, it leaves its saddle; when a human dies, he/she leaves his work. We should cry not for those who die, but for those who leave nothing behind. We should continue from the place they left. "

"We do not have right to halt; because we do not have much time..."



"There are people who are born at dawn and die at night. World is not as big as your eyes see. All unconquered secrets and unknowns will only be revealed through your grace and justice."
Sheikh Edebali



*“One day
a person’s
strength gets
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but
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light of
knowledge
goes even
through
closed eyes.”*

Sheikh Edebali

“Love must be the basis of our mission. Loving means quietness; you cannot reveal your love by shouting or reprimanding...”

“O Othman! Those who do not acknowledge their past cannot know their future. Know your past so well that you can walk strongly to the future. Do not forget from where you came so you may not forget where you go.”

This unique advice of Sheikh Edebali to Othman Ghazi became the drifting force, which was the cause for so many material and spiritual victories, for all the members of the Ottoman society from the Sultan to the scholars, and from soldiers to dervishes. Therefore the real founders of the Ottoman State were sultans of the souls such as Edebali and those who were trained using his methods. How nicely this is explained in the following story from the book titled *Gülistan*:

Sheikh Sadi says:

“One day one of my friends gave me some sweet smelling clay (a piece of clean earth) in the bathhouse to clean myself with it. I asked the clay:

“What are you? Are you musk or ambergris? I am enraptured with your sweet smell.”

The clay replied:

“I am the soil of a rose bush. Its leaves get filled with dews at dawn and then dripped them on me. I got molded with these dews. In fact I am just a piece of clay, but my sweet smell comes from the rose...”

Ottoman centuries, especially the blessings of the scholars in its first three centuries, spread ineffable fragrance to the world like the clay molded with rose water. Rose is the symbol of the Prophet (pbuh), and his morals and conduct are the shah of the roses.

May Our Lord bless us with sparks from His Messenger's (pbuh) perfect state. May Allah grant us to be a drop of dew on that exceptional Rose (pbuh).

Amin!



*"Patience
is very
important.
An Emir
should
know to be
patient. A
flower does
not bloom
before its
time. A
raw pear
cannot be
eaten, even
if it is eaten,
it would
stuck in
your throat.
A sword
without
knowledge
is like a raw
pear..."* Sheikh
Edebali

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